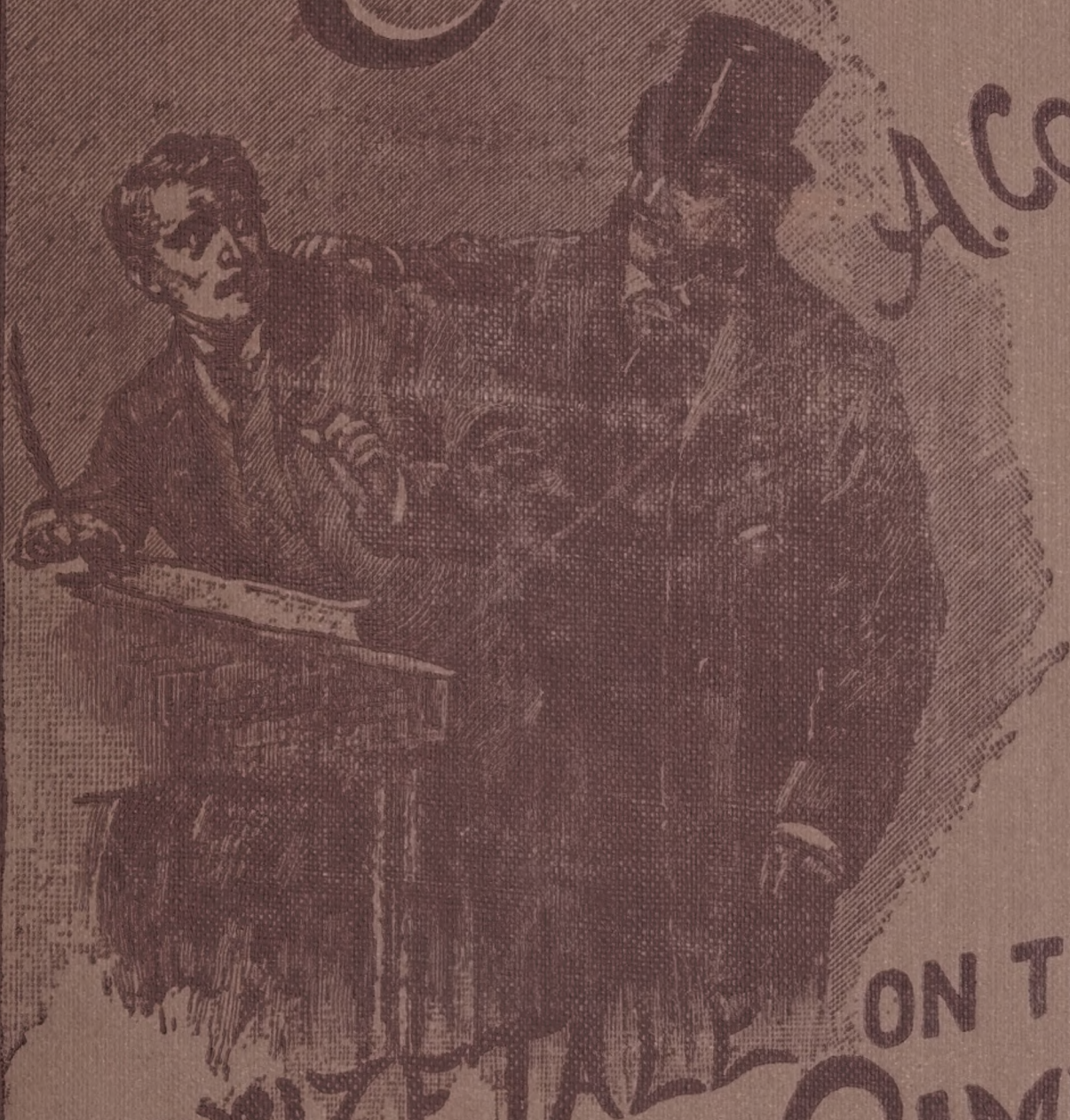


THE LIFE OF THE FAMOUS CLIFFES

By

A. COLBECK.



ON THE
PRIZE FIGHTING
EVILS of GAMBLING

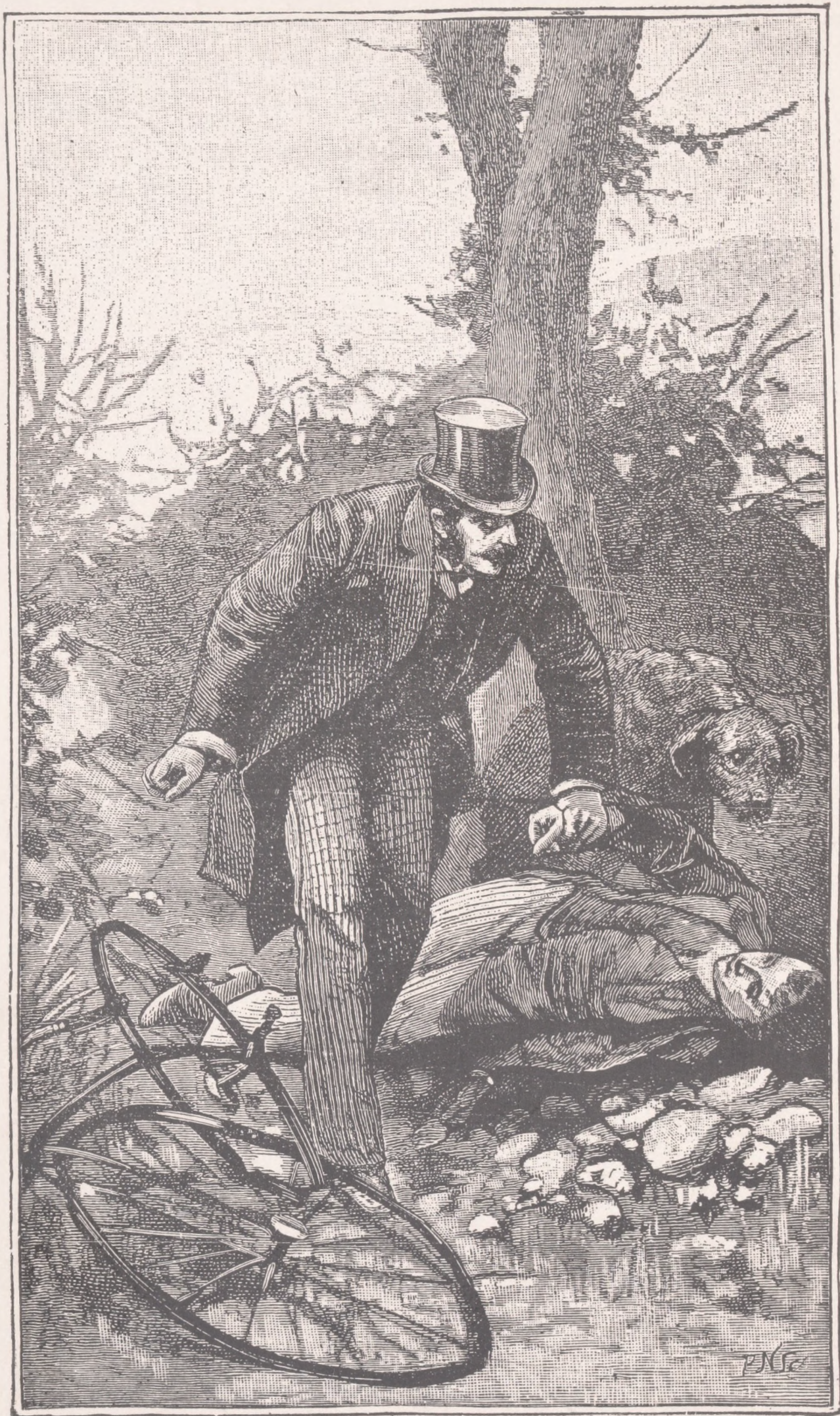
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The Fall of the Staincliffes.



THE BICYCLE ACCIDENT.—*See page 40.*

Frontispiece.

The Fall of the Staincliffes.

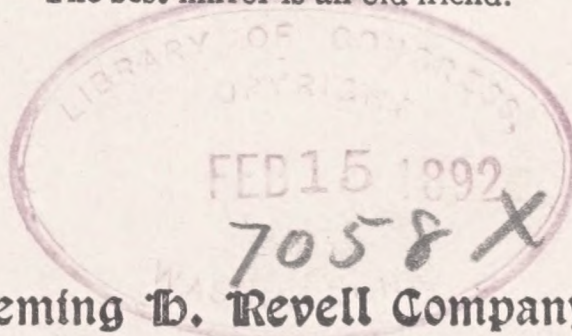
BY

✓
ALFRED COLBECK.

WITH FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS.

PRIZE TALE ON GAMBLING.

"The best mirror is an old friend."



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CHARLES KINGSLEY

ON GAMBLING.

The following letter of the novelist, Charles Kingsley, written to his son, is so in keeping with the spirit of this little volume that it is thought not out of place to insert here as an added force in making emphatic the dangers of that widespread mania which many thoughtful writers name as second to no other vice in its dangerous and debasing influences on young and old.

MY DEAREST BOY: There is a matter which gave me much uneasiness when you mentioned it. You said you had put into some lottery for the Derby and had hedged to make safe. Now all that is bad, bad, nothing but bad. Of all habits gambling is the one I hate most and have avoided most. Of all habits it grows most on eager minds. Success and loss alike make it grow. Of all habits, however much civilized men may give way to it, it is one of the most intrinsically savage. Historically, it has been the peace excitement of the lowest brutes in human form for ages past. Morally, it is unchivalrous and un-Christian.

1. It gains money by the lowest and most unjust means, for it takes money out of your neighbor's pocket without giving him anything in return.

2. It tempts you to use what you fancy your superior knowledge of a horse's merits—or anything else—to your neighbor's harm.

If you know better than your neighbor you are bound to give him your advice. Instead, you conceal your knowledge

Charles Kingsley on Gambling.

to win from his ignorance; hence come all sorts of concealments, dodges, deceits—I say the devil is the only father of it. I hope you have not won—I should not be sorry for you to lose. If you have won I shall not congratulate you. If you wish to please me you will give back to its lawful owners the money you have won. As you had put in you could not in honor draw back till after the event. Now you can give back your money, saying you understand that the head master and I disapprove of such things, and so gain a very great moral influence. Recollect always that the stock argument is worthless. It is this: “My friend would win from me if he could, therefore I have an equal right to win from him.” Nonsense. The same argument would prove that I have a right to maim or kill a man if only I give him leave to maim or kill me, if he can and will.

I have spoken my mind once for all on a matter on which I have held the same views for more than twenty years, and trust in God that you will not forget my words in after life. I have seen many a good fellow ruined by finding himself one day short of money and trying to get a little by play or betting—and then the Lord have mercy on his simple soul, for simple it will not long remain. Mind, I am not the least angry with you. Betting is the way of the world. So are all the seven deadly sins, under certain rules and pretty names; but to the devil they lead if indulged in, in spite of the wise world and its ways.

C. KINGSLEY.

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THE FALL OF THE STAINCLIFFES

CHAPTER I.

THE STAINCLIFFE FAMILY.

THE Staincliffes lived at Deerhill, an old-fashioned place, half manor-house, half farmstead, within easy walking distance of the town of Easingholme. The whole neighborhood was picturesquely broken into valleys and uplands, rocky knolls and wooded slopes, with a touch of moorland overlooking all in the dim distance. The town itself, not long ago confined to a bend in the main valley, where the river swept round in a splendid curve, had stretched its arms up the narrower valleys and planted its factories on the tributary streams. The surrounding hills had been ambitiously climbed to find pleasantly situated residences for its increasing population ; wide roads had been constructed in the direction of the larger villages, and many of these villages had been absorbed in the town's expanding area. Easingholme was now quite an important municipality, and proudly ranked among the populous centers of the kingdom.

John Staincliffe, senior, was the founder of the family fortunes. We need go no farther back, for

before his time the Staincliffes were nobodies. They lived in small houses ; they were laboring men and women ; they were as like their neighbors as the members of any family can be like the great mass of the people who never rise, but who always remain at the basis of the social fabric. John, the elder, aspired to greater things than his forefathers, and consequently cast about him for a niche in which to fix his foot, and take his first step upward. He found this niche in association with a confectioner and grocer of the town, the leading man in these combined trades, who wanted special help in his business on Saturday afternoons and evenings. The help was unstintedly given in return for scanty wages, but wages treasured as a welcome addition to his weekly earnings in the mill ; and, having an eye to perceive, and a brain to plan, John Staincliffe was speedily familiar with the combined trades in all their details, and able to commence business, in a small way, on his own account, and, more than that, to make the business pay.

Work in the mill was abandoned ; a shop with two windows, one for each branch of the business, was taken in the front street ; a large and freshly painted sign, stretching right across the premises, announced,

CONFECTIONER **JOHN STAINCLIFFE** FRUITERER.

The word *fruiterer* was an advance upon the sign of his former employer, who was contented with the modest announcement *grocer*—an indication of the young man's ambition to rise and make his mark in the town of Easingholme.

Wide-awake John Staincliffe proposed marriage to a modest young woman, three years his junior, with a zest for work, and a small legacy at her disposal. She entered heartily into his plans. In the earlier years of their married life she was regularly seen behind the confectionery counter dispensing the tasty articles her own hands had deftly made. Her husband carefully extended his connection as a wholesale dealer in the surrounding villages. John Staincliffe's name became familiar as a reliable customer, in the large distributive market center, where the vegetables and fruits of the southern counties converged into the hands of salesman, and rarer productions of foreign sunny climes could be had by those whose purchasers at home were nice in taste and rich in pocket. He would only give what he thought, and he would only buy what was in demand, but his money was always sure and timely. His word was his bond. He took advantage of the introduction of German yeast into the country. He went over to Rotterdam, and arranged for an exclusive supply in his own locality from one of the largest firms, and was soon supplying this handy article to small dealers over a wide area. His profits from this source were very large. Rapidly increasing wealth caused him to consider the possibility of fresh development. He entered upon the manufacture of biscuits, and found it to answer well ; then he built a place, and bought machinery for the making of sugared goods of all kinds, and engaged several artistic workers from Paris ; and, by the time he was sixty years old, his name was known all over the

country as a leading man in his own line of business, and a possessor of a very substantial fortune.

John Staincliffe had one son, whom he called after himself—John. He gave him an excellent commercial education, took him into business, and was delighted to observe his capacity and skill in every department. He had disposed of the retail business, and put his capital, and thrown his energies, into the two largest industries of fancy sweets and biscuits, before his son came of age. John, the younger, took well hold of both, and was soon as well able to manage them as his father. He took a more prominent civic position than his father, and was closely associated in membership, and by official election, with the church whose service his father had attended the greater part of his life. His father was proud of him, and died all the more peacefully because he was leaving behind him a worthy successor to his own name, and a thoroughly capable man to further develop the business which he had so patiently and self-denyingly established.

John Staincliffe, the younger, bought Deerhill some time before his father's death, and brought there his wife and three children. When his father died, he invited his mother to make her home with them, and allowed one of his foremen, Robert Cresswell, to occupy the old residence, which was not far from the works, at a nominal rental. He had connected himself by marriage with one of the leading families in the neighborhood. His wife had brought him a considerable sum—moreover, she was a gentle-spirited woman, of refined taste, and

with a deep devotion to her home and family.

The windows of a spacious sitting-room were thrown wide open. The two Mrs. Staincliffes were looking out upon the lawn, where a couple of girls were practicing tennis in the afternoon sunshine. The elder lady was seated near the open windows. She was short and stout, with a round, calm, fresh-looking face, whose cheeks had not yet lost ~~there~~ color, and hair, smooth and abundant, and of that peculiar whiteness suggestive of a departed dark brown shade. She was plainly dressed in black silk, fastened at the neck by a gold brooch, which, with a gold watch chain of a tiny linked pattern, were her only ornaments, unless her delicate lace mob cap could be considered an ornament as well. She placidly watched the two girls tripping across the lawn and swinging their racquets, a picture of contentment, and was inwardly thankful that her old age was a time of peace,

The younger lady sat well within the room. Her fingers were busily employed upon a child's-garment. She lifted her head occasionally to glance at her daughters, and smiled at any agile movement by which the ball was intercepted, or dextrous blow dealt with faultless precision cleverly returning the ball to the other side. She was tall and graceful, with brown eyes, dark hair, a healthy complexion, and a countenance oval and well-formed, but showing faint traces of approaching age. There was a mild look in her eyes which revealed deep sympathetic possibilities, and awakened trustfulness in those who looked upon her,

Presently a lad burst into the room, with school-books under his arm, and a cap in his hand—a lad of about fourteen years, and pantingly exclaimed, flinging down both cap and books,—

“Mother ! mother !”

“My dear child ! you shouldn’t run like this,” said the mother, putting down her sewing, and drawing him near enough to stroke his damp hair. “You may take a bad cold after perspiring so.”

“Can I go with Tom Cresswell to-night?”

“Where, dear?”

“To watch the cricketers practice.”

“Yes, you may go, but we must have tea first.” The lad disengaged himself, pleased with his mother’s consent, and walked towards the window. “You must come back early,” continued his mother, but he was watching the girls and did not hear her. “Do you hear, Herbert?” she called, and, as he turned toward her, “You must come back early.”

“Yes ! mother ; half-past eight will do, won’t it?”

“Don’t be later,” she said, and went out of the room to arrange for tea.

Herbert was about to step out of the window, when he seemed to become aware of the presence of his grandmother. He checked himself and gave her a touch of a kiss on the bright color of her left cheek ; she smiled sweetly and he disappeared with a bound through the window. The elder of the girls, a tall, lithe, dark-complexioned maiden, with a mass of dusky curls, darted forward, twisted up her rac-

quet, and cleverly tipped the ball across the netting, eliciting from her brother the cry,—

“Bravo, Lizzie! that was well done.”

Lizzie looked up to answer her brother, the ball was back again, she never attempted to strike, and there was a triumphant shout from the other side.

“We’ll give up now, Belle,” she said, quietly; then, with more of interest, “Are you going to stay at home to-night, Bertie?”

“Not much, thank you!” replied her brother, with a mocking bow.

“Where are you going, Bertie?” asked Belle, running up, and putting her arm round Lizzie’s waist.

“To the cricket ground,” said he.

“Will you take me?”

“I have another companion, Belle, and he might object, you know. Then ladies don’t generally go on practice nights.”

“Who are you going with?” asked Lizzie.

“Tom Cresswell?”

Belle withdrew her arm from Lizzie’s waist, and slyly pinched her; and then, with a clear voice breaking into the refrain of “The Blue Alsatian Mountains,” she ran indoors.

Lizzie put her arm through Herbert’s, and marched him across the lawn.

“Tom Cresswell will be leaving college soon, won’t he, Herbert?”

“At the end of the term.”

“Has he heard of any opening?”

“Yes!” said Herbert. “He told me to-day that

he has the promise of the next vacancy at the Easingholme Bank. He has done well at school, and old Bond thinks he'll carve out a good spot for himself in time. Hallo! there's Scamp," and he pointed to a large tan-and-white collie, at the bottom of a plantation, standing on his hind legs, with his fore-paws resting on the wall, and looking across the road. "Scamp!" he shouted, and gave a shrill whistle; the dog turned, saw them, and came bounding in long leaps toward where they were standing.

When the dog reached them he laid himself down on the grass, panting, and looked up at them with his large, gentle, inquiring eyes. Lizzie bent down, and patted his big head, and the dog returned the caress by thrusting his wet, black nose into the palm of her hand.

"Come, children, don't you want any tea to-day?" shouted Belle from the sitting-room window; in reply to which the two ran in, with the dog careering at their heels.

They made a pretty family group at the tea-table. The mother presided. She was attired in a neat, close-fitting costume of a very dark red shade, finely braided with a very narrow black braid, which suited her admirably; and her heavy dark hair was smoothed in front, and plaited and coiled behind, with the exception of one thick plait that passed over the crown. On her right sat the grandmother, and Herbert—a fine lad, with his mother's oval face and regular features; forehead high and somewhat narrow, eyes full and dark brown, nose

aquiline, mouth small, with a short upper and a slightly pursed under lip, chin rounded, and a complexion now approaching olive through exposure to the summer sun. His head was surmounted by very dark hair, inclined to curl, and set upon the neck a little too long and showing prominently the shape of throat formed by what is commonly known as Adam's apple. Opposite sat the two girls, contrasts, but both attired in white muslin, with sashes, Lizzie's red and Belle's blue. Lizzie, who faced her grandmother, was like Herbert in many particulars. The striking differences were in the complexion. Lizzie's having an under-glow of ruddier coloring, and in her larger and more compressed mouth and squarer chin. Belle was a blonde, with blue eyes and irregular dimpled features, and a mass of tawny hair with a propensity to tangle notwithstanding vigorous brushing and confining bands. Lizzie was nearly sixteen, Belle only twelve. The father sat opposite the mother, a well-built, fresh-complexioned, light-eyed, brown-whiskered man of forty, with a serious aspect dwelling beneath the pleasantry, and ready to show itself as soon as ever the breath of joyous conversation ceased to ripple the surface of his mind.

If the spirit of old John Staincliffe could have looked into the bright sitting-room, and seen his son and son's family so happily gathered together, surely he would have felt that he had not labored in vain. The thrill of pleasure which the mother felt, and the father's pardonable pride, when they glanced at the handsome boy, might have been

shared by the spirit of old John. He was the hope of the family. He had not begun at the bottom of the ladder, like his grandfather, or a few steps from the ground, like his father ; but his feet were already well up, and, with a start so favorable, he would certainly carry the family fortunes into altitudes of commercial and social life, which it was impossible for them to reach. He might win high laurels. A boy with such a face, and health, education, money, the heritage of a flourishing business—what might he not do? They thought that the Staincliffe name in this, the third generation, would become famous.

CHAPTER II.

A BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

THE boys were assembling in the square of Eastingholme College. It wanted yet ten minutes to nine o'clock, the time fixed for the commencement of the morning lessons. A few were conning over the tasks which had been set them on the previous Saturday morning, that they might go through a semblance of knowing them, if nothing else. A cricket ball was being thrown high in the air, across the field, and, where the ball fell, several rushed together, shouting, with uplifted hands to catch it, that the next throw might be theirs. Two boon companions, arm-in-arm, earnestly talking on some interesting theme, were pacing backwards and forwards in front of the schoolroom windows. A group of bigger boys were together in the corner, gathered about a newspaper, which one of them had pulled from his trousers-pocket, and was displaying to the rest. By the nodding of his head, and the gleaming of his eyes, he was evidently explaining with emphasis a paragraph from one of the columns.

"Look here," said he, "I've won him, plain enough."

"Where?" asked several eager voices, while the heads bobbed down simultaneously to see the particular line pointed out.

"There!" answered he, putting his finger triumphantly on the place. "*Nestor* stands first, and won the race by half a length."

Two or three drew a deep breath; one simple-minded lad opened his eyes to their widest extent to stare in surprise at the possessor of the paper; others simply looked on, or turned smilingly away. One undersized boy, with laughing, mischievous eyes, and lips formed to perpetual smiles, twisted quickly in front of the simple-minded one, and, suddenly leaping up like a Jack-in-the-box, cried—

"Bo-o-oh! wink up you peepers, Joseph, or they'll tumble out, my dear."

Joseph started, and the group broke into a sudden laugh, which was as suddenly checked by the appearance across the square of Herbert Staincliffe. Several voices shouted—

"Bertie!"

"Well! what's the row?" asked Bertie, approaching them.

"Oh! nothing particular," answered he of the newspaper, "only you owe me that wager for I've won the bet."

Bertie turned pale at this, and, with trembling fingers, took the paper into his hand. He gave it back, after reading the result of Templeton Races, without a single word. His companions fixed their eyes upon his face.

"Of course, you'll pay up," said the winner.

"Yes!" he replied; "but you can wait for it, I suppose."

"Until you get your pocket-money from your

ma," said the other mockingly. "Not so; you'd better tip up at once, like a man, or, if you haven't the money, I'll wait a week till you get it."

"You know very well, Dick, I can pay you now, but I wanted the money for something else to-day."

The signal was given for the school to assemble; the group broke up and mingled with the others; and with a hum, like that of a hive of bees, the boys swarmed through the open door, and into the schoolroom. Little opportunity was given, during the morning lessons, for conversation between Dick Pashley and Herbert Staincliffe, but Dick intimated many a time, by sundry signs, painfully obtrusive to Herbert when the other boys were watching, that he should expect him to pay the bet without delay

On the Friday preceding, when the boys were gathered in the square at midday, the talk had turned upon Templeton Races. Herbert had heard the men at the works speaking about the races, and had become interested in the event, whetting his interest afterwards by carefully examining a picture of one of the favorite horses in a copy of a leading illustrated paper, taken at home. He was fond of horses. The picture was a finely executed engraving of a beautiful animal. He very much admired it, and read the appreciative comments upon both it and its owner. During the conversation in the square, he displayed his knowledge and praised the racer; and Dick Pashley said he would bet two to one that *Nestor*, a competing rival, and a horse that Herbert knew nothing about beyond the mere

mention of his name by the work-people, would win the race. Herbert felt the searching glances of his schoolmates. He was not brave enough, by refusing the bet, and thereby appearing to turn his back upon the animal he had praised, to face their laughter; and he said, "Done!" They shook hands over it, as if they were quite used to transactions of that kind, and ready, as a matter of course, to abide by the result.

It was not the first bet that Dick Pashley had made. He was the son of the keeper of the Talbot Hotel in Talbot Square, and lived, with his father, on the premises. His mother was dead. Two of his sisters were married, and the third had no control over him. His elder brother cared nothing about him. He went into every part of the hotel and heard the talk of the company. Sporting papers were scattered in every room, sporting posters decorated most of the walls, sporting characters congregated in the bar; and Dick, nourished on this pabulum breathing in this atmosphere, was fast ripening for entrance into the sporting fraternity. He had done a little private business with the stable-boy, in odd small wagers and mostly to his own advantage. Once he had ventured a quarter against a similar sum of the chamber-maid, but he had lost it. Never had he thought of staking a dollar, and, if the chances had gone against him, he might not have paid it; but when Bertie Staincliffe said what he did about *Scudaway*, he saw the possibility of a stroke of good luck, as he thought, and at once challenged him on *Nestor's* superior merit, having overheard

a successful book-maker whisper that *Nestor* was sure to win

Bertie had never bet before, but had heard betting transactions talked about among his father's work people. He had greatly admired *Scudaway*, and thought he could not well be beaten. He had more money at his disposal than the majority of his schoolfellows, and was rather proud of letting them know it. So he accepted Dick's challenge. But he was not quite comfortable about it. He felt it was not the right thing to do. It spoilt the usual enjoyment of his Saturday afternoon, and the customary quietude of the Sunday. Then he particularly wanted this very money to purchase something as a present for Lizzie, whose eighteenth birthday was on that day. It was a keen disappointment to find that he had lost the bet, and that his money would disappear into Dick Pashley's greasy pocket.

The college was not a residential one, or this transaction might have come much more readily to the professor's ears, and Herbert's money been saved. It was built in the town, and abutted on one of the main roads. The scholars were the boys of the town, some of whom had entered by open competition from other elementary schools, and were educated gratuitously, and others from well-to-do families whose parents paid the prescribed fees. The style of building, more than the character of the education, had given it the name *college*. It was only a high-school, with endowed scholarships for entrance from lower local schools, and for exit to any of the Uni-

versities, managed by trustees, elected under specified conditions, from gentlemen of the neighborhood. The building, however—a large, stone structure, with parapet and central tower, a main entrance door of oak ornamented with huge brass nails, and windows glazed with small diamond panes, an antiquated-looking building without really being old—had become generally known as the College.

If the professor had known of the bet between the two boys, they would both have been at once, and severely, reprimanded. But although the signalling of Dick Pashley did not escape Professor Bond's keen observation, he could not make out what the signalling meant. Messages conveyed across the school in this way were not infrequent, and generally about some trivial school-boy matters beneath the dignity of his inquiry and attention.

When the lessons were over, and the lads trooped out, Dick stood in Herbert's way, and said,—

“Come, tip up.”

Herbert pulled out his purse, and drew from an inner pocket a bright piece of gold. His underlip twitched, and his face paled a little, as, without a word, he put the coin into Pashley's hand. Dick rubbed it between his palms, and then dropped it carefully into his vest pocket; while Herbert walked slowly and sadly away. The little fellow, with the laughing, mischievous eyes, and the perennial smile, said,—

“You don't mean to say you are going to keep it, Dick?”

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because it isn't yours."

"It is mine. I won it by a fair bet," Dick replied.

"I say, it isn't yours, and if you keep it you're a mean, shabby fellow," said the little one,— "and what's more, I don't think there's much to choose between you and a thief, if you keep it."

"Who are you talking to, Harry Clough?"

"To you, Dick Pashley."

"Well! you'd better mind your own business."

"And you'd better keep your business down at the Talbot, and not bring your knavish tricks into the school."

Dick was astonished at being tackled in this way by little Harry Clough. Harry was a favorite with the other boys. They would not see him thrashed. Dick knew this, and, therefore, was not inclined to push the quarrel too far. And, for the first time, he felt a sense of shame in the possession of money won by betting, as if, after all, there were some truth in Harry's statement that the money was not his own. The fun in Harry's eyes had become indignation, and the smile contempt; he was roused by the wrong which had been done to Herbert, and he did not mean Dick to keep the money without letting him know what he thought about it.

The altercation ended with the appearance of the under professor, and the boys dispersed and hurried away home. Herbert had heard nothing of all this. He had walked into the town to luncheon, as his

custom was, for, since attending the College, he had always gone down to have luncheon with his father at the office. When approaching the office he saw Tom Cresswell advancing to meet him. Tom had been on the look-out for him. For nearly two years now he had sat at his desk in Easingholme Bank. His punctual habits, careful work, courteous behavior, and sterling honesty had already commended him to his employers, and he was marked out for promotion. A close friendship was still kept up by the two boys. They saw each other nearly every day. Tom was a finely-built, open-faced, fresh-complexioned, blue-eyed young fellow, of generous disposition, and full of sympathy, and with a quick perception of other people's troubles. As he passed his arm through Herbert's, he said—

“What's the matter, old man?”

Herbert gave him no answer. Tom knew at once that something extraordinary had happened. He had no idea what it was, and felt some delicacy in pressing Herbert to tell him. So turning abruptly to another matter, he said,—

“It's Lizzie's birthday, is it not, Herbert?”

“Yes.”

“I want you to take her a present from me when you go home this afternoon.”

“It's very kind of you, Tom. What is it?” asked Herbert, forgetting somewhat his depression in the interest aroused by Tom's present.

“A cabinet for dried ferns,” answered Tom. “I have made it mostly myself. I have had the mahog-

any polished, and the little brass knobs turned and fitted to the drawers, but it is mostly my own workmanship."

"Just the very thing she wanted, Tom. I've heard her say she would like one many a time." Then after a pause, he added, regretfully, "I wish I could get her something as nice!"

"You will get her something, of course, Herbert. What have you thought about?"

"Its no use thinking. I'm hard up."

"No!" said Tom, laughing.

"I am, Tom. I've lost every blessed penny I had on the Templeton Races."

Tom jerked his arm away, and stood stock still, his eyes fixed on Herbert's face in blank amazement. When he could find words, he said,—

"What do you mean?"

"You needn't look at me as if I were a ghost, and in the public street, too. Come along, I'll tell you," and he passed his arm through Tom's and they turned down a quieter way. Herbert explained the whole affair. Tom was relieved as the story proceeded, and, when the end came, he said,—

"You'll never be so foolish as to bet again, Herbert?"

"I haven't thought about that. I wouldn't have cared a rap if I hadn't spent my money two weeks since on that new bicycle. It was my last dollar, and I was keeping it for Lizzie."

"Then you think more about the disappointment at not being able to buy Lizzie a present than the wrong you have been doing in betting the money?"

“Wrong! What wrong is there in the thing itself? That’s one of your fads, Tom. I was silly for staking all the coin I had, but as for the wrong of it—! I never bet before, certainly, but I never thought it was wrong to bet.”

“I hope you will think so, Herbert. However, it’s Lizzie’s birthday, and she will expect a present from *you*. She won’t expect one from *me*,” said Tom, slowly and thoughtfully, “and I would like you, Herbert, to accept my fern cabinet—to accept it as your own,” the words came incisively, “and make a present of it to Lizzie in your own name. Remember! I give it you. It’s yours. And my name is not mentioned to Lizzie at all.”

“But, Tom——”

“Never you mind about Tom. Leave him alone.”

“It wouldn’t be fair, you know. You would have to suffer for my foolishness.”

“I had very much rather *you* had something to give to Lizzie. It doesn’t matter about me. You are her brother, and her only brother, and I would not like her to be disappointed at not receiving anything from you. Then Belle wouldn’t rest until she had found out why you were without money, and that would grieve them all. Come now, old boy, take it, and pass it on to Lizzie. She will get it all the same, and it was made for her.”

“Well! if you will have it so,” said Herbert, and both their faces brightened as the conversation turned into another channel.

When afternoon school was over, Herbert called at Tom’s home for the cabinet. It was beautifully

made. When he placed it in Lizzie's room, and asked her to accept it, with his love, her eyes beamed with delight, and she kissed him. Neither Lizzie's beaming eyes nor joyous kiss gave him the satisfaction that he expected. Belle called him a "model brother," but he felt an irony in the words that was not intended. His mother thanked him for his thoughtfulness in obtaining a present so much to Lizzie's wish, but while the thanks were spoken he was ill-at-ease. There was a shadow across the sunshine that streamed upon him from every side—the shadow of himself—and it was a very black shadow indeed.

Next morning Lizzie received by post a large, thin package, which, on being opened, was found to contain two splendid specimens of ferns, dried and mounted, one a rare *Adiantum Farleyense*, the other a perfect *Osmunda regalis*. After being much admired they were placed carefully away in the new cabinet. The package also contained a brief note of apology for the late arrival of the ferns, and the best wishes of the sender that her life might be a useful and happy one. The note was read often, and with a scrupulous observance of every detail in the handwriting—an attention which its brevity and homeliness did not seem to warrant—and was then folded and put away among other scraps of paper in the secret drawer of Lizzie's writing-desk.

CHAPTER III.

A DISMISSAL.

THIS threatens to be a serious matter at the College, Louey," said John Staincliffe to his wife, a few mornings after Lizzie's birthday. "Bond writes me to say that he will have to make an example of both boys," and he handed a letter which he had just opened and read to his wife for her perusal. After she had read it, and handed the letter back with a troubled countenance, he continued, "I think Dick Pashley was more to blame than Herbert. He made the bet. Herbert was drawn on to take it, and I am glad he lost his money. It may teach him a lesson!"

The wife was silent.

"Bond seems to me to be making more fuss about it than he has any occasion to do. I cannot see the wrong in it which he seems to see. Of course, he must keep up the reputation of the school, and check any tendency to gambling severely and effectually, as he says. But this is a first offence, and I do not care for Herbert to be exposed as a culprit before the whole school, and have his name handed about the town as a gambler."

"It wouldn't be, dear, would it? Mr. Bond wouldn't do anything to cause a public talk about the matter. And Herbert really is to blame, and ought in some way to be punished for it."

“One would think he had been punished enough by the loss of his money,” returned Mr. Staincliffe. “That young scamp of a Pashley, who won it and kept it, deserves punishment, but Herbert might be let alone now. Then if Bond brings them before the whole school, he cannot prevent the matter becoming common talk in the town.”

“Herbert does not seem so sorry about it as I thought he would be,” said Mrs. Staincliffe. “I should be glad if Mr. Bond could in any way impress him with the evil of gambling.”

“The loss of the money will impress him enough, depend upon it. Herbert was to leave College at the end of the term, and come to business. He might as well come at once, and it will finish this affair. I’ll write Bond this morning, and tell him that I have decided to take Herbert at once into the office, and that he will not be going to the College again,” and having settled the matter in his own mind, he began to think about a new feature in his business which he intended to mention to his foreman for the first time that morning.

Herbert was quite satisfied with his father’s decision. He had been pleasurably anticipating the close of the term, and his introduction to business; and he was very thankful that his College days had been prematurely ended by the betting affair, and the threatened punishment averted, although the punishment to him was a far less serious matter than to his father. In conversation with him, his father had told him that he might take a month’s holiday before commencing work in the office. By the time break-

fast was over, he had planned a bicycle ride to Dunsford, where Aunt Ellen, his mother's sister lived; and, cheerfully whistling, he rubbed up his machine, and prepared for a morning's run as a little preliminary exercise. Scamp wistfully watched the rubbing process, and wondered whether he should be invited to join the wheels.

"Do you want to go with me, Scamp?"

The brown eyes filled with light, and the brushy tail swept the floor.

"Do you think you could manage ten miles?"

The forepaws were lifted from the floor alternately in rapid succession, and the black nose was pushed towards the wheels to sniff at their capability for the journey.

"Will you take good care of me while I'm away?"

Scamp jumped up, and trotted round his master and the machine, and then sat down again, as if he had said, "That circle is a charmed one, which nobody dare break through while I am near."

The heir of Deerhill was soon wheeling down the drive towards the highroad in the valley, and the dog was bounding after him in the greatest glee.

John Staincliffe drove to the works that morning in a meditative mood. He was a little uncertain as to how his foreman would receive his new proposal. He knew the worth of Robert Cresswell, and did not like to contemplate the possibility of losing him. He had been in his employ, and that of his father, for twenty-three years, and a more faithful servant never worked for any firm. He was a scrupulously

conscientious man, with a puritanical cast of character, rendering exact service to his master, and requiring exact service from the men under his charge. Naturally upright in heart, he had found both root and nourishment for his integrity in the stricter forms of Methodist discipline ; and it was this well-known trait of his foreman's character which made John Staincliffe doubtful about his favorable reception of the new proposal.

When the business correspondence had been attended to, he summoned Robert Cresswell to an interview in the private office. The foreman entered—a man of medium height, with a bald head, a round face scored with deep lines, firm lips, and deep-set penetrative grey eyes—a man whose countenance was the imprint of the force of his character.

“Good-morning, Robert,” said the master.

“Good-morning, sir.”

“You will have noticed a slight falling off in our smaller articles during the past few months.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now that is a part of our trade that pays very well, and I should like to give it a fillip. One or two other firms have taken the lead in principle, but I think we may beat them in design. In these smaller articles, purchased mostly by children, the point is to excite the children's curiosity, and to persuade them to buy on the chance of finding in the article what may, or may not, be there.” The foreman raised his head a trifle, and looked at his master out of the corner of his eyes. “I have thought that we might make up something in the

form of a purse,—Dupen could design it,—and place a trinket of some kind, so as to prevent disappointment altogether, in each one, with a penny say in every hundred, a nickel in every five hundred, and a dime in every thousand.” The foreman’s eyes gleamed strangely and his lips settled into firmer lines. “We could use new coins for the purpose,” continued the master, “which would give the children greater pleasure, and the finding of the coins by the lucky purchasers would help the sale enormously. What do you think about it?”

“That it won’t do.”

“Won’t do! Why?”

“Because it isn’t honest.”

“How do you make that out, Robert?”

“This way. A child buys a purse, opens it, and there’s nothing in it but a bead ring. The whole thing isn’t worth a tenth part of what he has given for it. Another child buys a purse, opens it, and finds a dime. The article is worth ten times more than he has given for it, and the purse into the bargain. Now, to give him his dime you rob nearly a thousand others, and put a substantial part of the robbery into your own pocket. That part you call profit, but it is not the result of legitimate trading. You wrong the children who receive no coin, you wrong the child to whom you give more than he is entitled to, and you wrong yourself by getting gain in a deceitful way. No, sir; it isn’t honest.”

“I ought to be the best judge of what is right and

wrong in the conducting of my own business," said Mr. Staincliffe sharply.

"You asked me how I made it out, sir, and I tried to tell you."

"Well! I've made up my mind to introduce something of the kind into the business, and I shall expect you to give the matter your careful supervision, Robert."

"The business has been built up by fair work and honest trade, and you will not maintain it by turning it into a lottery, sir," remarked the foreman, looking his master full in the face.

"I did not ask you about the maintenance of the business. I said I should expect you to attend to my orders," returned Mr. Staincliffe warmly.

"If your orders are right, sir, I shall have pleasure in doing so; but if wrong, I cannot."

"You mean that you will not carry out my new scheme," said Mr. Staincliffe, with a pale face, and speaking in suppressed excitement.

"If your new scheme is the one you proposed just now, I will not," answered the foreman, slowly and steadily, with his face fixed and calm.

"Then of course, we must part."

"We must, if you persist in introducing a bad principle like that into your business. I am willing to serve you, sir, as I have served your father, as faithfully as I can, with a good conscience, but I will not sear my conscience for any man."

"You have a very high way of talking about matters like these, Robert," said Mr. Staincliffe, cooling a little. "You are altogether too fastidious.

It is not a gravely moral question like you suppose it to be, but a mere stroke of business policy. I do not want to part with an old servant like you. I would rather keep you a hundred times. Take till to-morrow to think about it, and let me know then."

"I shall think to-morrow as I think to-day. Policy in business is to me either right or wrong, and never mere policy. If you are determined to do this, I cannot remain, and so, sir, there is no need to wait."

"All right," snapped out Mr. Staincliffe, again pale and excited. "You can go. I shall want the house for your successor, but we can arrange that afterwards. A week from now you may consider yourself at liberty."

"Let me say, sir, that I think you are making a serious mistake, and that you will live to very deeply regret this day," and Robert Cresswell walked from the private office only to enter it once again.

With a sad heart at noon, he told his wife and son what had happened. They were both grieved at the dismissal. It had come so unexpectedly that they knew not what to say. When the first surprise was over, Mrs. Cresswell said,—

"Never mind, Robert. You have done right, and you need not fear the consequences. If we have to suffer, we can suffer. You may not obtain another situation readily at your age, and it will be a trial to leave this home, where we have been happy and comfortable, and thought to stay yet for many years, but the Lord will provide."

"It might have been worse, too, father," said

Tom. "I shall step into the vacancy left by Harrison's removal next week, and my salary will be increased. It's come just at the right time, hasn't it?"

"I am very sorry," the father said, "but I am more sorry for Mr. Staincliffe than I am for myself. I thought he had more moral perception. Old John wouldn't have done it. He was not so closely allied to the church as young John, but he was a man of firmer and steadier will. Perhaps Mr. Staincliffe will see his mistake, and keep the business sound after all; but I am afraid he has become too much captivated lately by the desire for riches, and committed his heart, as well as his mind, to this new scheme."

That afternoon, when Robert Cresswell and his son were busy at their separate employments, a woman's voice, low and ardent, was secretly breathing out heartfelt gratitude for a husband's courage and a son's cheerfulness, and pleading for guidance in the shadows which were closing about them, that through the shadows they might come forth into clearer light. Lower yet and more ardent was the voice when it made mention of one round whom darker shadows still—shadows of a different and more fatal kind—were threatening to gather, and, with intense fervor she asked that the Sun of Righteousness might scatter the shadows, ere they could dim, beyond recovery, the vision of the soul.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACCIDENT.

MR. STAINCLIFFE was driving home, absorbed with his own thoughts, and allowing Juno, the bay mare, to take her own pace along the country lane, and around the bend of the avenue, toward Deerhill. Easingholme was hidden from view by a great shoulder of partially wooded land, and the lovely valley that stretched before the driver was so Arcadian that the busy town might have been a hundred miles away. Through the trees, here and there, glimpses of the house could be caught—a house of stone, low and large, with mulioned windows and capacious doorway, a terraced lawn in front and a mass of magnificent foliage on the rising slope behind—a house once inhabited by a titled family, but now, with its small, but choice estate, in the possession of John Staincliffe.

Often, when driving home, had he viewed it with pride, and dreamed pleasant dreams about its future in connection with his son and heir. But on this particular evening he never once lifted his eyes to look at it. The sun was sinking in a glow of amber; and a soft, yellow haze was creeping about the trees, changing the green to gold, and melting their outlines in its mellow radiance. The air was still. The twitter of the birds, the pat, pat, pat of

the horse's feet, and the rattle of the wheels only accentuated the silence. Nature was in one of her tranquil moods. But John Staincliffe was too much occupied with his own thoughts to feel the soothing influence of his surroundings. The dismissal of Robert Cresswell troubled him. He looked vacantly between Juno's ears ; he held the reins loosely in his hands ; and the mare trotted briskly over the ground, with her nose and her thoughts in the same direction—toward the stable.

When round the bend of the avenue, and near where a narrow lane ran into the broader way, a dog sprang barking toward Juno, causing her to lift and shake her head, and her master instinctively to tighten the reins, and pull himself together.

“What is the matter, Scamp?” he called out. “Come, clear the way.”

But the dog had no such intention. He barked louder, jumped at Juno's nose, and made her shake her head more violently, and lift her feet higher to strike him. This was unusual conduct for Scamp. He was a very quiet dog, seldom barking except when chained or suddenly startled in any way. Mr. Staincliffe began to suspect that something was the matter. He stopped Juno, and commenced questioning the dog.

“Well ! what is it, Scamp?”

The dog ran toward the narrow lane, stopping at the corner, and wagging his tail, as if inviting Mr. Staincliffe to follow. When Mr. Staincliffe reached the place the dog went down the lane. He looked back to see whether he was still being fol-

lowed, and, finding he was not, he ran to the trap again, and barked as before. Mr. Staincliffe descended, tied Juno to a fence, and, with the dog capering before him, went down the lane for about a quarter of a mile, when the dog bounded away and disappeared round a sharp curve. Mr. Staincliffe came round the curve, and saw a bicycle broken in the road, and a lad laid on a heap of stones. He did not realize that the lad was Herbert until he noticed that Scamp was lying beside him, and licking his hands ; then he ran to him, bent over him, and anxiously asked,—

“What has happened, Herbert?”

“I’ve had a spill, father,” said Herbert, turning a pale face toward him with a reddened scar on the cheek bone where he had struck the ground.

“Are you much hurt, my boy?”

“I cannot tell. There’s something amiss with my shoulder. I cannot raise myself without pain. But my legs and arms are all right.”

“Let me see if I can move you to an easier place,” said the father. “Which shoulder is it that hurts you?” And, having ascertained that it was the left, he placed the palm of his hand carefully under it, and, lifting him with his other arm, laid him gently down upon a grassy mound close by. Herbert’s face blanched with pain while he was being lifted, but he bravely forbore crying out, and, after he was settled on the mound, he said,—

“Thank you. That’s better. How will you get me home, father?”

“We’ll manage that,” he replied. “The trap is

at the end of the lane. I was driving home when Scamp stopped me. How long have you been here?"

"Not very long, I think ; but the fall stunned me, and I must have been a little while coming to myself. Scamp was licking my face, and he lay beside me, until, I suppose, he heard the wheels of the trap in the road."

"He'll keep guard now, while I fetch the trap ; won't you, Scamp?" said Mr. Staincliffe, patting the dog's large head. The dog held up his forepaw to shake hands, and then trotted round Herbert, and settled down close beside him. Herbert laid his arm across the dog, and smiled.

The father was soon back again, and, before long, Herbert was laid in his own bedroom at home. The doctor found that he had broken his collar-bone. He was confined to his bedroom for several weeks, and, when sufficiently recovered to bear the journey, he was taken down to Dunsford to Aunt Ellen's for rest and change.

The accident had put out of the father's mind the trouble at the works, and Robert Cresswell's dismissal did not occur to him again until the following day. But for the accident he might have mentioned the matter to his wife, although he seldom said anything to her about business affairs. He thought it was useless either to inform or to consult his wife concerning what happened at the works. Robert Cresswell, however, was well known to her, and she had a kindly regard for him. She would be sure to hear of his dismissal, and would want

to know how it had come about. Mr. Staincliffe would have mentioned it on the morrow when it did occur to him but it was a distasteful task, and he was not quite comfortable in his own mind about it. So he allowed the day to slip by, and several days, without referring to it, until the following Tuesday, and then, in the evening, when they were alone, Mrs. Staincliffe said,—

“John! you didn’t tell me that Robert Cresswell had left the works?”

“No, Louey. I didn’t wish to trouble you about it.”

“Why has he left?”

“Because he wouldn’t obey orders.”

“That is unlike Robert. Is it the first time he has refused to carry out your instructions?”

“Yes! but who told you about it, Louey?”

“Lizzie.”

“And how did Lizzie hear?”

“From Tom Cresswell. Lizzie saw Tom on Sunday afternoon, when she was returning from school, and somehow Tom mentioned his regret at leaving the old home where he was born. Lizzie was surprised, and asked him why he was leaving, and he told her because his father had left the works.”

“Did Tom say he had *left* the works?”

“I think so. That was what Lizzie said to me. Didn’t he leave?”

“No! he was dismissed.”

“Dismissed, John!” exclaimed Mrs. Staincliffe. “Then you sent him away. Was it so serious as that?”

“Yes, Louey. I wouldn’t have parted with him if it had been a trifling affair. But when he charged me with dishonesty, and told me he wouldn’t do what I desired, I had no alternative.”

“And what was it about, John?” asked Mrs. Staincliffe in surprise.

“About the development of a particular part of the business on new lines which he considered were not right, and which he, therefore, refused to attend to.”

“Then it was a matter of conscience with him?”

“I suppose it was. But his conscience ought not to control the whole business. I have a conscience, too.”

“What are these new lines, John?”

“I don’t care to bother you with them, Louey.”

“It will not bother me as much to know them as to be ignorant of them. You know I think highly of Robert Cresswell, and am sorry you have had occasion to part with him.”

“Well, if you will know, I intend having a number of small coins put into sugared goods, children’s goods, to induce them to buy—two or three coins into every thousand, or so; and Cresswell calls it dishonest, and I don’t know what beside. He seems to regard it as a species of gambling. I think he did call it a lottery, and he blankly refused to obey my instructions, and superintend the work.”

Mrs. Staincliffe was quiet for a few minutes. She was evidently thinking the matter over. Her face became more serious as she said,—

“Are you quite sure, dear, that Robert was not right? Don’t you think he may have had good reasons for his refusal?”

John Staincliffe looked steadily at his wife, and then said, “Louey, business is business. A man must do as other people do. He cannot be squeamish about trifles. And if his servants are not under command, if they will not do as he desires, he must get other servants that will, or else see his business decline. I regret very much having to part with Robert Cresswell after his long and diligent service, and all the more because he was a man my father trusted; but if he wouldn’t do as I bid him, I couldn’t do with him in my employ. We’d better let the subject drop,” and he buried his face in the evening paper.

Mrs. Staincliffe did not refer to the matter again. She was troubled about it for a few days, but thought there might be something more in it than what had been explained to her. She almost forgot it in her attentive care for the welfare of her son. Herbert got downstairs again, and she went with him to Dunsford, remaining two weeks with her sister. When she came back, Lizzie and Isabel joined their brother for another two weeks before his return home.

Ellen Fairfax was Mrs. Staincliffe’s eldest sister. She had married somewhat late in life a widower of the quiet market town of Dunsford, who had retired upon a comfortable competency made out of an old established business as a manufacturing chemist. He had one daughter, Catherine, by a former wife,

and she and Mrs. Fairfax lived together. Upon his death he had left them the larger part of his fortune. Mrs. Fairfax was a cheery woman, small and prim, more rounded in feature than Mrs. Staincliffe, though of the same complexion and with the same family likeness. Cousin Kate was a fine, tall girl, with large blue eyes and abundant light hair, a blonde complexion, regular features, with a somewhat large nose and chin, and an abandon of manner to most people very attractive.

"I'm heartily glad you girls have come down," said Herbert. "Kate has nearly talked me to death. I shall have a chance of recovery now that I am only one of three."

"Herbert! how can you say so!" said Kate. "You've been as garrulous as a magpie yourself ever since you came. I shouldn't have talked half as much if you hadn't made me."

"No! Herbert, my boy," said Belle, sitting beside him, and drawing his head down on her shoulder. "You've simply jumped out of a warm frying-pan into a very hot fire. You are not one of three, but one against three, for I can talk, and Lizzie can talk, and if we both help Kate, there is no hope for you at all. You'll simply have to make a decent *quietus*, and vanish from this mortal sphere."

"*Quietus*, Belle! what words you do use!" Lizzie exclaimed. "Who is your authority for that word?"

"William Shakespeare, my dear, the great master of our tongue," said Belle.

“I wish he were living now, and would master yours, Belle,” Herbert said; “but I am afraid it would be too great a task even for him. Come, let us go out a little. What do you say to a pull on the river?”

“Jolly! but you cannot pull,” said Belle. “You’ll pull your collar-bone in two if you try.”

“Don’t you know, Belle, that the knitted part of a bone is stronger than any other part of it?” said Herbert.

“No, doctor; I was not aware of that interesting anatomical fact, but I will bear it in mind. Still, you must wait until the knitting is really done, and not strain it too soon. It wouldn’t do for you to pull, Herbert, you know it wouldn’t, so what is the use talking about the river.”

“Plenty,” responded Herbert. “I couldn’t pull very well yet, that’s a fact, but Cousin Kate can handle a pair of oars splendidly. We have had many a turn on the river. And with you and Lizzie to help her, and me to command, we ought to spin along like the Sultan’s caique, or the *City of Paris*.”

They went down to the river, and were soon gliding smoothly over its placid surface. Herbert fixed his eyes on Kate, and talked mostly with her. They had become quite familiar in the two weeks Herbert had spent at Dunsford. She was very free with him, treating him in an easy, sisterly fashion, much as Belle herself did at home; and Herbert was drawn toward her, and found her company very agreeable. They had necessarily been much together in the two

weeks, for they were the only two young people in the house, and the mother and aunt had left them largely to themselves.



“Don’t you feel lonely here, sometimes, Kate?” asked Herbert.

“Awfully.”

“Then why don’t you come oftener to Deer-hill?”

“Yes!” chimed in Herbert’s sisters. “You don’t often come, Kate,” said Lizzie. “And we should be so glad to have you,” said Belle, “to keep us alive a bit.”

“I should think the others will be kept very

much alive by you, Belle," answered Kate. "But I should like to come if mother would let me."

"We'll manage Aunt Ellen, Kate," said Belle, twisting her oar out of the river with an awkward jerk which sent the water splashing over her brother.

"Here, Belle, what do you call this? I shall be drowned soon," Herbert called out.

"I call it feathering," answered Belle. "What do you call it?"

"Hydropathic treatment of a not very acceptable kind," said Herbert. Then, turning to Kate, "Shall we go down as far as the bridge, Kate?"

"Yes! if it is not too far," answered Kate.

"Oh! it's not too far. There's the tiniest little chapel down there, girls, right on the bridge, carved all over, and covered with images. It was built centuries ago to commemorate some battle during the Wars of the Roses. We can go down and send the boat back, if you like, and return through the town."

They agreed upon this course, and Kate bent to the oars, and pulled with her long arms, sending the boat, helped already by the current, sweeping along. They soon reached the bridge, and arranged for the return of the boat; then inspected the little chapel, and started through the town. Herbert slipped his arm through Kate's, and they sauntered along, keeping ahead of the two sisters, who were taken up with the shop windows, and it was late when they reached home.

Another two weeks passed pleasantly away. The

girls were very happy, and Herbert began to think it was worth breaking a bone to spend a month with Cousin Kate. When the time for returning drew near, they all three besieged Aunt Ellen and made her promise that Kate should spend a few weeks with them in the autumn; and they went home in better health and spirits for their sojourn at Dunsford, and joyously anticipating a renewal of their friendship when Kate came to Deerhill,

CHAPTER V.

TEMPTATION.

HERBERT was soon fairly started in business life. His father did not confine him to the routine of office work, but allowed him to familiarize himself with every department. He went through the whole premises, consulting his father and the various foremen on matters which he did not understand and, without subjecting himself to the toil of every department, obtained an insight into their working. The main part of his time, however, was spent in the office, where a desk was provided for him, within an enclosure, next to the private apartment of his father.

There were five clerks in the office, two married men, two single men, and a boy. One of the married men acted as cashier. The two younger men worked near the partition of Herbert's enclosure. With these he became more familiar than with the others, partly because of their proximity, and partly because one of them, Solomon Dempster, assiduously cultivated his acquaintance in many insinuating ways.

When Friday evening came, Herbert stood by Dempster's desk watching the cashier pay the workpeople. They filed past, men and women, giving in their names at a small window, and receiv-

ing their wages. Herbert could see into the street, and he watched many of the workpeople form themselves into groups, and pass part of their money from hand to hand. He called Dempster's attention to this, and said,

“What does it mean?”

“They're only straightening off for last week's races,” said Dempster.

“Is it a regular thing?” asked Herbert.

“Yes!”

“And so common among the workpeople that the women bet, too?”

“Yes! It wasn't allowed when Cresswell was head-foreman, but it was done then often enough on the quiet. Now he's gone nobody interferes. I do it myself,” said Dempster. “I've ten shillings to draw to-day on the steeplechase of last Saturday, and I shall venture ten to-morrow on the football match for the county cup tie”

“Do you think betting is as common in the other factories of the town as it is here?” asked Herbert.

“Bless you! here we are moderate. That straight-laced, faddy Methodist of a Cresswell, who was turned off by your father because he thought the sale of the new purses was a species of gambling, checked it here; and there are men and women about the place yet too much like him for much money to be turned over here. It's a pity he didn't take himself, and his canting Methodism, away long ago.”

Herbert said nothing in reply to these abusive remarks on Robert Cresswell. He watched the

groups outside, and particularly noticed the eager faces of the women, until the crowd had melted away, and everything was quiet. He then retired to his own desk, and Dempster thrust his tongue into his cheek, and winked at the partition that divided them.

The next Monday morning, while Herbert was at his desk writing a letter, he heard the rustle of a newspaper behind the partition, and the voices of Dempster and his fellow clerk, Twoose, engaged in a whispered conversation. He soon found that they were discussing the result of Saturday's football match, and that Dempster had lost his money. His father came out of the private office, and the newspaper was quickly folded and put away. The cashier, and Mr. Bonny, the senior clerk, were both out, and when his father disappeared the newspaper was brought out and unfolded again. Lower whispers were indulged in, the words of which Herbert could not catch, and then Twoose ordered the office boy to go into the works and bring him particulars about certain goods that were being despatched that morning. As soon as he was gone, Dempster said,—

“Mr. Herbert, would you like to see the paper this morning?”

Herbert appeared, and spreading his hand over the paper to smooth it out, said, “What's the news?”

“You know that Oxenthorpe was beaten on Saturday.”

“Yes; and you lost your ten shillings.”

"I did. But what of that? I've lost many a ten before, and shall again."

"And win many a ten, too, Dempster; aye?" said Twoose.

"Of course. It wouldn't do always to lose," said Dempster.

"Are you going in for anything on Wednesday?" asked Twoose.

"Rather. I shall back *Sirius*," he replied.

"To what extent?"

"Five to one."

"I'll take you, and we'll make it sovereigns."

"Right," said Dempster, and whipping out a little pocket-book, he entered the bet.

"What is there on Wednesday?" asked Herbert.

"The challenge cup at Dunsford races," said Twoose, pointing to a column in the newspaper.

"Read it. Six entries. The Duke of Bixterfield's *Sirius* runs for the first time. He's a choice steed, splendidly bred, a general favorite, and it is supposed he will take all before him. But I have my doubts about him. There's a jockey riding in that race who will not come in second if he can help it."

Herbert glanced at the paper.

"And who is your winning jockey, Twoose?" asked Dempster.

"He's the man that rides *Tarantella*. She's the one for my money," answered Twoose.

"We shall see," said Dempster. "But I shall not be far out whichever wins. I shall venture on *Tarantella*. She'll come in a good second, but *Sirius* will win. You should back *Sirius*, Mr. Herbert."

“ I haven’t thought of backing any,” said Herbert.

“ Haven’t you ?” said Dempster, in affected surprise.

“ No! but I’ll put a sovereign on *Tarantella* against your five,” said Herbert.

“ W——ell!” said Dempster, with some hesitation, “ if Twoose will relinquish his bet in your favor, I’m willing, but I am hardly at liberty to take you both. What do you say, Twoose?”

“ It’ll do for me,” said Twoose, “ if Mr. Herbert wishes it.”

So the little pocket-book was whipped out again and the entry altered.

On Thursday morning Herbert picked up the paper in the breakfast-room at Deerhill, and found that the challenge cup had been won by *Tarantella*. When he arrived at the office a sealed envelope lay on his desk awaiting him. It contained a line from Dempster, congratulating him on his good luck, and a five pound note. He placed the note in his purse, not feeling quite satisfied, and yet elated with success.

This was the commencement of many similar transactions between Herbert and Dempster, for Twoose took only a secondary part, and was employed by Dempster as a foil in tempting Herbert to venture larger and larger stakes. Herbert was cautious, however. He was unwilling to be drawn into a regular course of betting, and particularly when he noticed that, in the long run, his losses were heavier than his gains. Dempster had amply

refunded himself for the temporary loss of the five pounds—indeed, that affair was the result of a plot between him and Twoose, conceived by him, and, as we have seen, delicately executed together. Twoose had already received a pecuniary acknowledgment for his part in the cunning transaction. Dempster was a deep, scheming, wicked fellow, intent upon making what he could out of Herbert, by all the means within his power. He thought if he could secure a bet from him, and allow him to win, it would be easier for him afterwards to obtain the advantage. But Herbert, while occasionally staking small amounts, refused to do it with systematic regularity, and would not be tempted to venture any large sum.

The influence of Herbert's home was mainly against the life into which Dempster's wiles would have led him. He knew that his mother and grandmother, and both his sisters, would be deeply grieved by a knowledge of the few bets he had already made; and that his father, if not deeply grieved, would view such conduct with displeasure. While his father was professedly a religious man, and actively associated with the financial working of a Christian church, he seldom manifested his religion by any definite sacred act, such as the devotional reading of the Bible, or prayer, in the presence of his family; and he never required his children to attend Sunday-school. Herbert went in a desultory fashion, when he felt inclined to go, or when he had nothing else particularly to engage his time. Belle accompanied Lizzie sometimes, to help

her with her class, and to show a kind and sisterly interest in Lizzie's religious work—not because it was a personal pleasure to go. Lizzie delighted in the Sunday-school. She was seldom absent. She won the hearts of the children. She compelled the admiration of the teachers. She spent within its walls some of the happiest moments of her life.

Mr. Staincliffe was gratified that Lizzie's inclinations were religious, and that she was so much interested in Sunday-school work. But he was not concerned that Herbert and Isabel carelessly regarded both school and church—went to the one only when they found it convenient, and to the other because they had been accustomed to go, and it was considered respectable. If Herbert had been trained to attend school regularly from his younger years, and not left to choose whether he would attend or not when he entered upon his teens, the influence of the school would have been another barrier in the way along which he was now tempted to go.

His mother was concerned that the bent of his mind was so little in the direction of sacred things. She would have been much better pleased if both he and Belle had taken the same interest in Sunday-school work as Lizzie, especially pleased if Herbert had done so, for she was quick to detect indications of looseness in his behavior. She knew that Belle was sounder in moral principle, and likewise not exposed to such strong temptations. Often in private had she prayed for her boy, and in many motherly ways endeavored to cherish within him a regard for religion ; and her hope was in keeping the

affection, which she knew he had for her, unsullied, and using that as a magnet to draw him upward into a higher life.

The grandmother seconded the mother's endeavors. She was a devout woman, softened and melted by a lingering old age—a woman who had been very active, and who had traveled beyond the realm of her activities into another realm of quietude, where, as in Bunyan's Beulah, "the air was very sweet and pleasant." Herbert and his sisters had a tender regard for Granny. Over Herbert himself she unconsciously exercised a controlling influence. He would hesitate before doing anything of which he knew Granny would disapprove.

Herbert was able to reject many of Dempster's proposals. His betting was desultory, but, as time went on, it gradually became more frequent, and for rather larger sums. Dempster could wait. He saw the drift of Herbert's nature. He calculated the strength of the forces that were keeping Herbert back from entering freely upon a gambling career. And, with every additional bet, he knew that these forces would be weakened, and that eventually they would give way altogether. So he did not unduly press his bets upon Herbert, but, by conversation, and in other ways, aroused his interest in sporting of all kinds, and watched his opportunity to make a bet whenever it was given him.

Slowly Herbert became more and more entangled in the meshes of this deceitful man, and more and more bound by the cords of a habit, which was insidiously winding itself about him. The daily pa-

pers became increasingly attractive, not because of his deeper interest in public affairs, but because of his anxiety to obtain information concerning betting news. Occasionally, when widely-known or important races were coming off, he would purchase a paper devoted entirely to sporting, in order to pick up a few wrinkles, as he termed them, about the chances of the races, that he might know on which horses to place his money. Without any particular shock to his feelings, without even knowing how far he was being led, he went on, always careful, however, not to divulge either gain or loss at home, or to let them know in any way that he was tampering with a custom which they would certainly condemn.

Three months passed away, and Dempster was satisfied, on the whole, with his successes. The great day was drawing near when one of the most famous races in the country was to come off in a neighboring county town, and Dempster thought he could persuade Herbert to go with him. As they were leaving the office one afternoon, Dempster walked along the street with Herbert, and said,—

“It will be a busy time at Westonleigh next Wednesday.”

“Yes,” said Herbert.

“There is likely to be a very fashionable gathering.”

“I suppose so.”

“You know that Lord Westonleigh is entertaining a very distinguished party—members of Parliament, foreign ambassadors, and a royal Duke ; and

that, on Wednesday, the Prince of Wales himself, it is expected, will come down and join the party. When the plate is run for, and the two thousand guineas, the course is always favored with the presence of royalty."

Herbert made no remark. He surmised that some proposal was about to follow this information, and, after a moment or two of silence, Dempster said,—

"Do you think of going next Wednesday?"

"No!" said Herbert abruptly, and betraying a little agitation. Dempster observed the agitation, but affected not to notice it.

"I intend going," said he.

Herbert was again silent.

"There will be plenty going off, and money to make for those who are sharp enough to make it," continued Dempster. "I did a good stroke of business there last year, and I don't think my luck will forsake me this year. I could put a friend up to a thing or two if I could find one willing to go with me."

"You're on the wrong man, Dempster, if you want me to accompany you," said Herbert. "I shall not go. They may be diddled out of their money that like at Westonleigh next Wednesday, but I shall keep mine at Easingholme. Good afternoon," and without waiting to hear anything more, or even Dempster's responsive adieu, he hurried away.

Dempster walked slowly down a side street in the direction of home. He was vexed with himself at his failure, and vexed with Herbert because of his decided refusal. He had been looking forward confidently

toward the great day at Westonleigh, and thought he could carry out a plan which would put Herbert more in his power, and enable him to reap considerable pecuniary benefit. Herbert, however, seemed on the point of breaking away altogether, and it appeared as if he would have to look out for other and less lucrative prey.

Herbert had left the office with his thoughts centered in his home. Cousin Kate was coming in the evening. He had already pictured her appearance, and filled in the picture with the familiar details at Deerhill. He had seen Granny quietly kissing her, and his mother showing her the various rooms, and Lizzie wishing her a hearty welcome, and Belle boisterously offering her all manner of assistance. He had imagined his father giving orders about the comfort of the visitor. Somehow, to his fancy, Deerhill was transformed, lifted out of the common atmosphere into a rarer one, by the expected presence of Kate Fairfax. Its associations and influences were more consciously present with him, and their worth seemed enhanced by the anticipation of bringing Kate into them, and making her a part of them. When Dempster joined him he felt annoyed. His company was unwelcome. His talk was an intrusion upon the thoughts and feelings that were sweetly exercising their sway within his nature. His proposal to go to Westonleigh came to him like a shock ; it awakened him for a moment to a realization of his position ; and in the rebound, when the shock was over, he was true to his better self, and kept his feet out of the snare.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM AND LIZZIE.

THE children's voices in Sunnybank Sunday School were blending sweetly together in the singing of the closing hymn. Sunnybank was a suburb of Easingholme in the direction of Deerhill. Lizzie Staincliffe sat at the small organ. She had selected a plaintive minor melody to suit Twells' pathetic hymn,—

“At even, 'ere the the sun was set.”

The lesson had been on the compassion of Jesus, and the hymn was appropriately chosen. She had striven to bring Jesus near to the children in her own class—to impress them with the fact that He was a living and present Saviour, and in the closest and tenderest sympathy with us even now ; and her scholars had been unusually attentive. As their voices, clear and strong, mingled and rose with the voices of the others, she felt the truth of the words :—

“What if Thy form we cannot see ?
We know and feel that Thou art here.”

Robert Cresswell was the superintendent that afternoon, and, in the course of an address, had referred to the world's misery, and to sin as the cause of it, warning the children against the various temptations

to which they might be exposed. He had spoken a very few words about gambling, and had expressed the hope that the children would shun it in every form, and not even purchase sweets that were called lucky sweets, but spend their money in some other way. Other evils were referred to, and the compassion of Jesus shown towards those held in bondage by these evils, as well as those who were suffering in different ways as the result of them; while not forgetting those whose sufferings were not traceable to any evil source, but simply the result of causes over which they had no control.

The teachers remained after the scholars were dismissed, to consult about and arrange for a series of preparatory lessons for a forthcoming examination. As they left the school, Tom Cresswell passed out with Lizzie, and walked beside her along the road toward Deerhill. Through Herbert's friendship from early boyhood, and by close association in Sunday-school work, they had become intimate with each other, and their intercourse was natural and unrestrained. There had been no confession of love between them. Lizzie had never seriously thought of it, and Tom had been careful not to speak about it, but had conducted himself in the free and almost brotherly fashion which a long and close acquaintance had fostered and given him a claim to.

"Herbert has not been to school to-day, Lizzie," Tom said.

"We have company. Cousin Kate, of Dunsford, is staying with us," Lizzie replied; "and I suppose

Herbert thinks he must stay at home and entertain her."

"How long has your cousin been with you?"

"Only a few days."

"But Herbert has not been to school for a few weeks," said Tom.

"You know, Tom, he has not much liking for school. He never had. And a very feeble excuse is sufficient to keep him away."

"I saw him in the town the other day with a young lady—a tall girl, with light hair. Would that be your cousin?"

"I suppose so. Had she blue eyes?"

"I was not near enough to see the color of her eyes," Tom replied, with a smile. "She was rather gaily dressed in a kind of pink muslin, and stepped along in an easy way as if she cared for nothing and nobody."

"Yes! that would be Kate," said Lizzie.

"Is she acquainted with Dempster, one of your father's clerks?" Tom asked.

"Yes! a sort of half-cousin to him, I believe. She is not really cousin to us," continued Lizzie, "only the daughter of the gentleman Aunt Ellen married, and whom we knew very little about. But we feel toward her as if she were really a cousin."

"I see. She was Mr. Fairfax's daughter," said Tom, "and Dempster is very likely related to the family of the first Mrs. Fairfax. Do you know, Lizzie, I have an impression that Herbert's friendship with Dempster is not likely to do him much good. He is

not the kind of man Herbert should become too friendly with."

"Herbert is not very friendly with him, is he, Tom?"

"Well! I scarcely know. They are often together."

"Is there anything wrong about Dempster?"

"His habits are not such as I should like to see Herbert forming," answered Tom. "He is a betting man, and a frequenter of houses that are not considered the most respectable in Easingholme." Lizzie's face became pale and grave, and she looked earnestly into Tom's face, and Tom said appealingly, "I wish you would warn him, Lizzie."

"I will try," said Lizzie, in low tones. Then, appealing to Tom, she said, "But you could warn him, Tom. You know more about Dempster than I do, and Herbert would be sure to listen to you."

"As soon as I have a chance I intend speaking to him," said Tom, "and if we both do it, our words may have some effect."

They walked quietly on for some distance gravely occupied with their own thoughts. It was a peaceful autumn afternoon. Here and there a large brown leaf floated straight and slowly down from the arching trees overhead, and settled among innumerable others that strewed the pathway. The sunlight fell aslant the trees and slept on the ground between their shadows. The two figures moved on, flecked by the alternating sunshine and shade, a symbol of human life. But presently they left the trees, and came into the open, mellow light,

where the road was free from shadows, and their own forms felt the uninterrupted warmth of the sun's westering rays. Lizzie's face brightened as she said,—

“We are having a picnic, Tom, next Wednesday, at Castle Dene. Will you join us?”

“With pleasure,” Tom readily and cheerily answered.

“Thank you,” responded Lizzie, and she thought the picnic would give Tom an opportunity of speaking to Herbert, besides affording her the enjoyment of Tom's presence and company.

Tom looked at his watch, and bidding Lizzie “Good afternoon,” turned into a footpath that led across the fields, and, by a nearer way, to his own home. He had not noticed, that, in the distance, round a bend in the road, Herbert and Kate Fairfax were appearing, and had caught sight of him as he entered the fields. Lizzie, too, was unaware of their approach until their laughter roused her from the reverie into which she had sunk upon Tom's departure. When they came near, Kate said,—

“You might have kept your companion a little longer, Lizzie, and given me an introduction.”

Lizzie smiled sweetly, and answered, “You will soon be able to make his acquaintance, Kate. He will join us at the picnic on Wednesday.”

“Charming!” exclaimed Kate. “That will make three gentlemen and three ladies, and so we shall preserve the balance of power.”

“Three!” said Lizzie. “Who is going beside Herbert and Tom?”

“My cousin Dempster,” answered Kate. “We were talking about the picnic this afternoon, and Aunt Louey suggested that we should ask him. It is a long time since I met him, except for a minute or two with Herbert in the town the other day. We were playmates as children, and quarrelled together in the heartiest and most refreshing fashion. I remember pulling his hair one day, for willfully wrenching an arm off my favorite doll, until he screamed frightfully, and brought me into such disgrace that, for a full hour, I felt like a cruel barbarian. He may have forgotten it, but I haven’t. I should like to meet him again, and see whether his hair has grown in that particular place.”

“I can vouch for that, Kate,” said Herbert. “His hair is all right. There is no trace of your fingers there now. But he must have been a little coward to scream like that, and a worse barbarian than you to wrench the doll’s arm off. You were only doing justice to your injured *protege*. I should call your punishment a healthy exercise of lynch law.”

“Who is the young gentleman that will favor us with his company on Wednesday, Lizzie?” asked Kate, looking at her out of her eye corners, and with a cunning smile.

“Tom Cresswell,” answered Lizzie, “one of Herbert’s friends.”

“Yes! one of *Herbert’s* friends,” echoed Kate. Then turning to Herbert, she said, “And is he one of *Lizzie’s* friends, too, Herbert?”

“Of course,” said Herbert, laughing. “Tom and Lizzie are capital friends, with tastes very much alike, and they always get on exceedingly well together. And there is no nonsense about Tom. He’s a downright good fellow, with a heart as kind as his face is handsome. Don’t you think so, Lizzie?”

“I will not say what I think,” said Lizzie, with the color mounting to her cheeks, and her eyes filling with light. “Tom is a very true friend of yours, Herbert, and desires to keep you out of all harm.” The words were said with calm and deliberate emphasis, and effectually stopped all inclination to banter on his part and Kate’s.

“Harm! I’m not aware that harm threatens me,” said Herbert. “But if it did, I know that Tom, like a friendly warrior, would throw his shield over me. I’m safe enough, Lizzie. Tom’s good offices will not be needed.”

Kate turned aside to pluck a cluster of red hawthorn berries. They were out of reach, and Herbert, hooking the stag’s-horn handle of his walking-stick round the branch, pulled it down close to her hand. Nipping off the cluster, she fastened it in the bosom of her dress, and, upon resuming the walk, turned the conversation into another channel.

Lizzie was concerned, after Tom’s hint about Dempster’s habits, that he should be invited to the picnic. She did not show her concern, however, nor did she object, by word or sign, to the invitation. He was Kate’s cousin, and she could not offend Kate by an objection founded merely on Tom’s

statement. She did not know how much was implied by Tom's statement, but she feared that Dempster was a man of loose character, unfit to enter by family recognition into closer intimacy with Herbert, and she felt sorry that he was to be asked to join them. She knew that Tom would not have mentioned him, and the danger that might result from his growing friendship with Herbert, if he had not had grave reasons for doing so. But, personally, she had no acquaintance with him; she could bring no definite charge against him; she saw that any unexplained objection to his company offered by her would be liable to be misinterpreted; therefore she kept her fears within herself, and hoped the picnic would not be spoiled by his presence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PICNIC.

TOM CRESSWELL joined the party at Castle Dene in the early afternoon. Herbert introduced him to his cousin Kate, and also to Dempster, although an introduction to him was scarcely necessary. Tom and Dempster had seen each other frequently about the town, and, although not on speaking terms, were so far acquainted with each other as to know that their lives were apart and adverse,—that there was nothing in common between them. Dempster had heard that Tom was invited, and, when introduced, welcomed him with dry courtesy. Tom was not aware that Dempster had been invited, and was therefore surprised to see him.

Castle Dene was a wooded valley, widening down into meadow lands, and running up to the moors. On a rocky knoll, in the middle of the valley, and toward the moors, were the ruins of an old castle. The ruins were not extensive. No one had thought it worth while to care for their preservation. Wild creepers had wandered over them, and displaced one stone after another, until there were now only two detached fragments, and these were being so worn by wind and rain as to threaten with every winter's storm to come toppling to the ground. When one immense forest covered this part of England, as was the case when the castle was built, it

must have been a sequestered spot, far removed even from the slow life of those long past days ; and, although now visited occasionally by a few people, mostly groups of young pleasure seekers, it was a sequestered spot still—a spot where one might easily forget the throbbing and nervous activities, which were filling human lives only a few miles away.

In some parts the valley was very narrow, the trees rising abruptly on both sides, and the footpath keeping beside the stream that here ran in a straight and deep channel, and tumbled in a succession of musical cascades down the rocks. In other parts the valley opened, the stream became wider and shallower, the trees revealed a broader belt of sky, and the footpath swept in long curves, under arching branches, toward the top of the hill. On this autumn afternoon, when the tints were at their loveliest, it was a delightful walk up the valley to the castle, where, between the two fragments of ruin, on a grassy plateau, luncheon could be served in perfect picnic style.

Upon Tom's arrival the party proceeded to the castle, and were soon engaged upon a merry meal. Dempster made himself very agreeable, paying special attention to his cousin, who divided her favors between him and Herbert. Of Tom, she took little direct notice, and yet, indirectly, allowed nothing he said or did to pass by unobserved. This tall, handsome young maiden, with her engaging abandon, saw more than she seemed to see. Beneath all her outward carelessness there was a perceptive and retentive mind, and, while her talk was mainly di-

rected to Herbert or Dempster, her thoughts were not seldom fixed upon Tom. He devoted himself to Lizzie. While luncheon was preparing, and the meal in hand, he anticipated Lizzie's wishes, and helped her in all kinds of ways. The rest of the company looked to Lizzie for everything they required, and Lizzie's efforts were seconded by Tom's faithful and ready service. Belle fired her conversational shots all round. She was quite impartial. She kept the company laughing by her witty sallies, and prevented anyone from completely monopolizing the attention of anyone else.

The meal was cleared, and the company started for a further ramble toward the moors. They descended the knoll on the other side, and kept to the path close by the stream, crossing here and there by the help of stepping-stones. The valley became narrower, and soon they had to commence climbing the hill to reach the fringe of the moor. Lizzie and Kate accepted the assistance proffered by the young men, but Isabel, younger and more nimble, and less conventional, went forward with elastic steps, and was soon lost to view. Both Herbert and Dempster helped Kate, Herbert on the right hand, Dempster on the left, pulling her up the steeper places, her tongue all the while being a good match for their two. Tom and Lizzie came slowly behind, Lizzie feeling delight in the firmness of Tom's arm, and smiling her thanks as he helped her up some more difficult slope where the footing was not very secure.

"I did not expect to meet Dempster here, Lizzie," said Tom.

"He was invited because he was Kate's cousin," said Lizzie. "They decided upon the invitation last Sunday afternoon, and I only heard of it after our conversation about him."

"He is very courteous to your cousin, and inclined to be pleasant with us all," Tom remarked.

"Yes!"

"What do you think about him, Lizzie? He does not seem to be what I said he was the other day."

"I do not like him."

"Why?"

"I can hardly say. There is something about his eyes I dislike. They look hard, as if they had no pity in them, and they are not steady. They never look right at you, but waver, and glance off, afraid, it would seem, lest by steadily looking they might reveal something which they would rather you did not know. They are not like your eyes, Tom."

"Then you do not dislike mine, Lizzie?" said Tom, smiling.

Lizzie blushed to find that she had made this inadvertent confession. She did not reply to Tom's question, but silently mounted the hill. Tom turned the conversation on to Sunday-school matters, always interesting to Lizzie, until they came out from the steep, wooded slope upon the open moor. Kate, with her two companions, had gone off to the right, and Belle was directly before them. They were making their way toward Belle, when they heard her shout, and saw her beckoning for them.

"What's the matter, Belle?" Tom called out, as

they approached the place where she was kneeling.

"Do be sharp," answered Belle; and, when they came up, "Look into this crevice."

"What is there?" they both asked, glancing between two rocks, and then Lizzie exclaimed, "What a lovely spicant fern! Can you get it, Tom?"

"Let me see," said Tom, bending down, and pulling up his coat sleeve that he might thrust his arm into the crevice.

"Mind what you are doing, Tom," said Isabel. "I tried to get the fern for Lizzie, and I found something else down there that I didn't bargain for. Look into the corner."

"Do you mean that brown thing? Why!" exclaimed Tom, abruptly, "it's a hedgehog. I thought it was a little heap of brown earth, but I see the prickles now."

"Yes, and I have felt them," said Belle, looking ruefully at her hand. "You'd better mind, Tom. The prickles are sharp."

"Have you seen a hedgehog before, Lizzie?" Tom asked.

"No!" said Lizzie. "I should like to see this one."

"I'll fetch it out," said Tom, "and perhaps it will unroll itself and run away."

Getting his hand well under the little creature, Tom lifted it out, and placed it among the short heather. But it remained rolled up. There was nothing to be seen but a ball of prickles. When the

other three, who had wandered off to the right, noticed Lizzie, Isabel, and Tom carefully inspecting something on the ground, they came across to see what it was.

"Where did you find it?" asked Herbert.

"Between those two rocks," said Belle.

"Cannot you make it unroll itself?"

"No! you can try, Herbert, if you like. I have had quite enough to do with the little pincushion."

Herbert took two sticks, turned the creature on its back, and tried to force it open. Suddenly Dempster cried, "Here! I'll open it," and before they were aware of his intention, he dashed a heavy stone, which he had lifted unnoticed from behind them, full upon the hedgehog, and crushed it into a bleeding mass.

Lizzie and Belle were shocked, Tom was grieved, Herbert was disgusted, only Kate showed no sign of emotion. Dempster surveyed them with a thinly-disguised sneer.

"You haven't lost the nature you had when a boy, Dempster," said Herbert.

"What do you know about my boyhood?" asked Dempster, sharply.

"This. That you once willfully wrenched off an arm from one of Kate's dolls, and that bit of cruelty and the bit we have now witnessed are both of a piece," Herbert replied.

Dempster glanced rather savagely at Kate, and Kate smiled.

"If it were not beneath a lady's dignity to touch a brute like you," Herbert continued, his temper ris-

ing as he spoke, "I should be delighted if Kate were now to punish you as effectually as she punished you then."

"Hush, Herbert," said Lizzie. "You shouldn't talk so."

Dempster's brow lowered, and he turned away toward the wood. The rest followed. The lovely spicant fern was forgotten. A feeling of sadness came over the company, and it was some time before they entered again into the free flow of conversation. The three girls walked together. Tom and Herbert came behind.

"Wasn't that a cruel thing to do, Tom?" said Herbert.

"It was," Tom answered; "and if I think rightly, he is capable of more cruel things still."

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"That he is unscrupulous—a betting man, who would delight in obtaining the money of another, and tempting that other astray for the sake of fleecing him." Herbert was silent. Tom continued, "I have seen you often with him lately, Herbert, and I have been anxious lest you should enter upon a course which would be sure to end in ruin. You don't bet, do you?"

"Well—as to that—I scarcely know what to say," said Herbert, hesitatingly. "I have ventured sometimes to stake a little money when I saw a chance of winning. You know, Tom, it would be a pleasure to win money from a fellow like Dempster."

"Not for me. It would be no pleasure to win

money at all except by fair transactions or honest labor."

"Ay! you have a fad about such things, Tom. But I haven't. If a fellow is willing to stake his money against yours, with his eyes open, knowing perfectly well that the chances of the game, or the race, or whatever they may bet on, may go against him, I don't see where the wrong comes in."

"If it were a matter of pure chance," said Tom, "it would be wrong to me, because if I won I should take another man's money and give him nothing for it. But it is not a——"

"Well, but, Tom, if the man knew when he staked his money that he would get nothing for it, I cannot see how it would be wrong."

"The man's knowledge, or otherwise, would make no difference to the quality of the transaction. And, I say, commercially, and morally too, the quality of a transaction like that is bad."

"You were about to say something else when I interrupted you. What was it?"

"That when a man makes a bet, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is not a bet on a pure chance. The man makes the bet on certain secret information which the other man is not supposed to know. It is a matter of duplicity—a pull between the two as to which is the craftier man."

"And what about the Stock Exchange, Tom? And what about almost every kind of business you look into? Isn't it all duplicity? Are not all commercial men trying to obtain the better of their fellows in the very way you have described? Why, on

your own showing, we are a nation of gamblers, and, if we were not, our commercial system would collapse."

"Not so bad as that, Herbert. There are honest tradesmen yet. But if business is done on these lines—if men take advantage of the ignorance of their fellows, it is no justification of the method they adopt. Betting is none the better because the principles on which bets are made find frequent expressions in commercial life. We ought the more deeply to deplore an evil which is so widespread. Then, in business—I do not now refer to the Stock Exchange—in ordinary business, a man does receive something for his money, if not an equivalent; but when a man bets and loses, he receives nothing."

"But if he wins," put in Herbert.

"If he wins," said Tom, "he receives all, and gives nothing but disappointment and bitterness, which, in fact and in consequence, is perilously like robbery." Herbert was again silent, and Tom continued, "But I did not intend our conversation taking this turn. I wanted to warn you against Dempster. You cannot keep out of his way so long as he continues in your father's office, but you can refuse to make a friend of him. Don't be enticed to places where he goes, and don't fall into his ways."

"Never you fear, Tom. I'm not so fond of him as all that. He has well-nigh spoiled my pleasure to-day by sticking to Kate so closely. I wish to goodness he hadn't come. There he is, helping Kate

down the incline," and he pointed under the trees where the two were going down together. The lowering expression had departed from Dempster's face, and he was laughing at some remark that had just fallen from Kate's lips.

Herbert darted off to join them, and Tom offered to assist Lizzie and Belle. They quickly reached the grassy plateau between the ruins, and, gathering together their belongings, turned their faces toward home.

It was dusk, and, before they were out of the valley, the dusk had deepened into darkness. Kate and Isabel, with Dempster and Herbert, led the way, walking in a group, and as Tom and Lizzie followed some distance behind they heard Belle's merry laugh, and occasionally the mingled chatter of all the party. Evidently Dempster had not allowed Herbert's words to interfere long with his enjoyment, and Herbert had so far overcome his temper as to be talkative and agreeable.

Tom informed Lizzie of his conversation with Herbert. He imparted to her his fears that Herbert was on unsafe ground, and that Dempster was likely to make the ground more slippery still. Lizzie felt much concerned about him, and resolved to speak to him on the first opportunity. Both she and Tom became silent, stepping slowly through the darkness, along the narrow path beside the stream. Lizzie stumbled against a piece of rock, and Tom said,—

"Take my arm, Lizzie."

She quietly obeyed, and Tom placed his right hand across Lizzie's as it lay within his arm.

“I have something to say to you, Lizzie. I have been waiting to say it some time.” He felt Lizzie’s hand tremble within and tighten over his arm. “We are old enough now to understand each other. Will you be mine, Lizzie? I have loved you a long, long while, loved you with all my heart, and it would make me very happy if I knew that you loved me. I think you do, but I would like to be quite certain. Is it so?” Again the hand trembled within and tightened over his arm, and Lizzie answered—

“Yes!”

“My dear, I am very happy,” said Tom, and he pressed his hand over Lizzie’s with a thrill of joy.

“So am I, Tom,” said Lizzie; and turning her face toward him in the darkness, she received and gave the seal of her confessed affection in a simple kiss.

They walked on silently, in tranquil gladness, and did not reach the others until they were close by the entrance to Deerhill. After the farewells, Tom and Dempster started together for Easingholme—Tom happy in the possession of his new secret, and thinking about the enhanced joy of his future life; Dempster reflecting bitterly on Herbert’s passionate reproaches, and meditating how he could satisfy his cherished resentment in more thoroughly effecting Herbert’s ruin.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO INTERVIEWS.

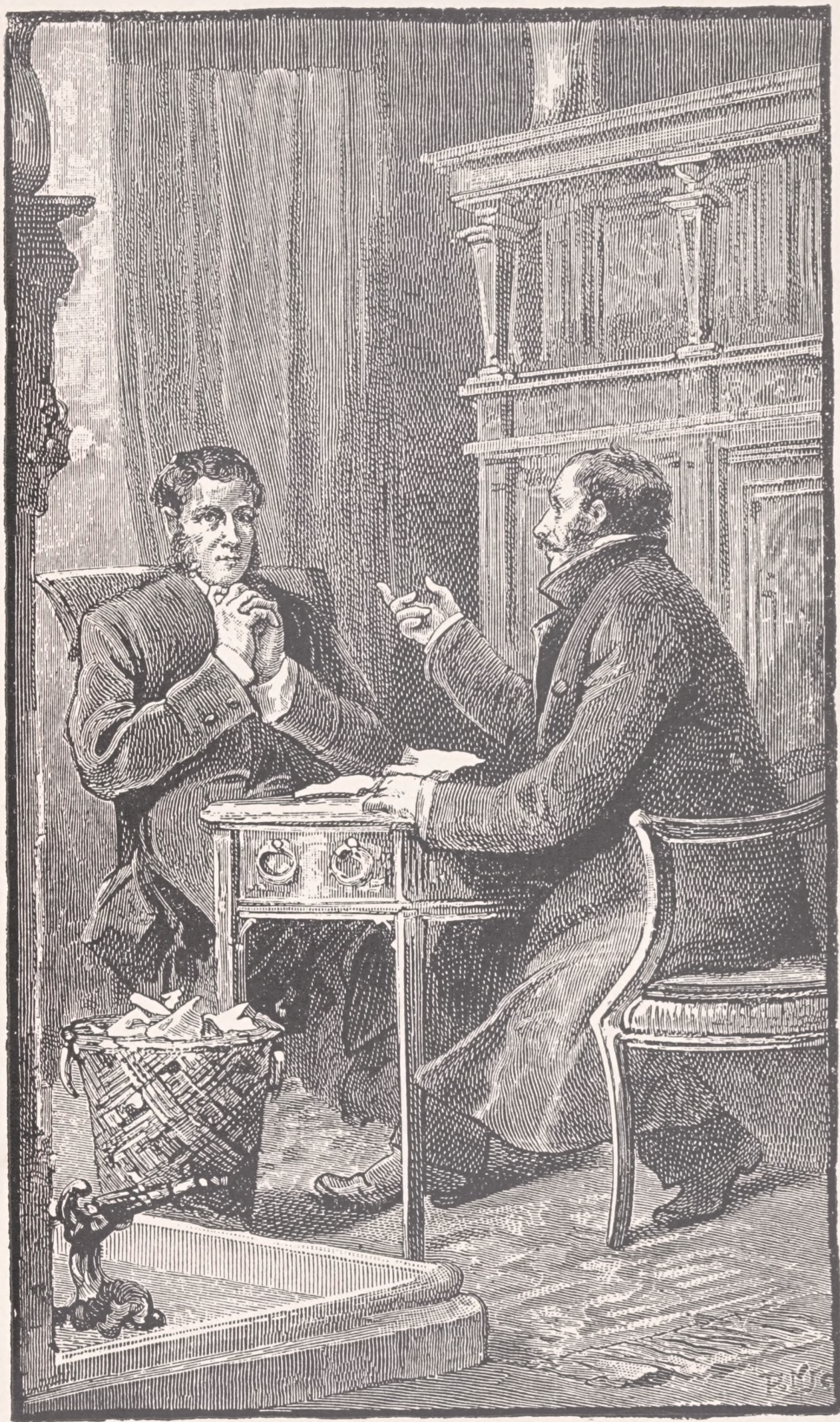
THE Rev. Nicholas Tremayne had just pushed a volume of Dr. Adam Clark's Commentary into the shelves, and was about to reach down Matthew Henry to consult him also preparatory to mapping out his sermon for the following Sunday, when a tap came to the study door, and the servant handed in a card bearing the name of *John Staincliffe*.

"Show him in, Lucy," said Mr. Tremayne; and he pulled the armchair near the fire for the accommodation of his visitor.

John Staincliffe was the big man of his congregation. During his two years' residence at Easingholme he had seen Mr. Staincliffe's face at least once on the Lord's Day, and he had often visited the family at Deerhill, but he had never been favored by a visit from Mr. Staincliffe at his own home. He wondered what wind had blown so unlikely a visitor to the manse, and half-hoped it was a wind which would scatter a church debt, the accumulation of several years, that sadly hampered him in his religious work.

"Good-morning, Mr. Staincliffe. Glad to see you. Will you take a chair by the fire?"

"Thank you, I will," said Mr. Staincliffe. "It is not very warm this morning. The fog is chill, and



AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.—*See page 80.*

a sign of coming winter," and he glanced round the study at the well-filled shelves, and the few plain pictures, mostly photographic views, and at last allowed his eyes to settle upon a sweet woman's face, in an oval gilt frame, above the mantle-piece.

"You look very cosy here, Mr. Tremayne."

"Yes," said the minister. "I like a cosy study. Dull surroundings would mean dull sermons. Cheerful things to look upon are likely to favorably affect a man's train of thought. A preacher, above all men, should not be a hypochondriac."

"True, Mr. Tremayne. Sermons should be bright, and—short," said Mr. Staincliffe, at which the minister nodded and smiled.

"I came to see you about a very unpleasant matter," continued Mr. Staincliffe, suddenly altering his tone. "I have no wish to cause trouble in the church, but I cannot put up with references to my business which reflect upon my character." And Mr. Staincliffe's face wore something very like a frown.

"I am not aware of having made any such references," said Mr. Tremayne, lifting his eyebrows, and looking at his visitor in surprise.

"No! *you* haven't. *You* would have more sense than to do so. The references were made in the school address last Sunday."

"And who gave the address, pray?"

"Robert Cresswell."

"You must be mistaken, Mr. Staincliffe. I can trust Robert Cresswell. He would say nothing wrong, I am sure."

“Well! but he has said something wrong,” said Mr. Staincliffe, testily. “I have been informed, upon reliable authority, that Robert Cresswell made unjust references to a certain part of my trade, calculated to damage that trade in the eyes of the children; and what is worse, likely to give the children a bad impression of my character.”

“I do not understand you, Mr. Staincliffe. I must trouble you to explain.”

“You know that Robert Cresswell was dismissed from my employ some months ago.”

“Yes.”

“And why he was dismissed.”

“No! I do not know why except in a very general way.”

“Hasn’t Cresswell told you?”

“He told me that you could not agree upon certain particulars connected with the working of the business, but he did not tell me what the particulars were.”

“Well! he refused to carry out my orders in a contemplated new departure, and we had to separate. It would have been wise for him to have let the matter rest there. But last Sunday he stigmatized this branch of my trade—the branch about which the trouble arose—as a species of gambling, and, of course, by inference, associated me with gamblers. That is bad enough, isn’t it?” said Mr. Staincliffe, waxing warm, “and, to speak plainly, I do not intend to put up with it. Either Robert Cresswell must be called to account, or I shall resign my office as treasurer, and leave you.”

“ I am very sorry, Mr. Staincliffe; but what is that branch of your trade which Robert Cresswell has called a species of gambling?”

“ Placing small coins in a given number of confectionery purses, children’s goods, to induce the children to buy on the chance of obtaining a coin.”

“ I was not aware that any part of your business was carried on in that way,” said Mr. Tremayne gravely.

“ I have not done it long, and I am only following in the track of others,” said Mr. Staincliffe, unconsciously apologetic in tone. Then bristling up at the recollection of Robert Cresswell’s address, and observing the grave expression of Mr. Tremayne’s countenance, he said, “ But what wrong is there in it?”

“ A good deal, I should say,” calmly responded Mr. Tremayne.

“ Perhaps you agree with Cresswell?” said Mr. Staincliffe, hotly.

“ I do. I thing Robert Cresswell was right in calling it a species of gambling.”

“ *You do.* Then you will please consider me no longer treasurer of your church funds, and you will oblige me by removing my name from your list of members,” said Mr. Staincliffe, becoming extra courteous in his attempt to bottle up his wrath, although he knew the attempt was made at the risk of explosion. He sprang from his seat, and grasped the knob of the door.

“ It would be a pity for you to sever your connection with the church in a moment of anger, Mr.

Staincliffe," said the minister whose face had become pale. "You would regret it afterwards. Let me advise you to think it over a few days, and also calmly to consider the principle involved in the new departure in your trade, and see whether the principle approves itself to your conscience as a follower of Jesus Christ. I seek your good, Mr. Staincliffe, God knows, and I would save you from spiritual peril."

"My mind is made up, Mr. Tremayne. I thought of this before I came here. I will send up my books and whatever balance is owing to the church in any way from me; and I must ask you to consider me as no longer connected with you. Good-morning," and he opened the door, and was about to go.

"A moment, please, Mr. Staincliffe. I would beg of you again to think about the step you are taking. It is a very serious one. It affects your family as well as yourself. It will affect the church too,—disturb its unity, lower its social influence, lessen its possibilities of service, affect it in many ways. You cannot see all that your resignation and departure involves."

"If you think, Mr. Tremayne, that my business is dishonest, and if you will permit my name to be maligned," said Mr. Staincliffe, turning round, "you must take the consequences."

"Words like those need qualification," Mr. Tremayne answered. "I would fain hope, Mr. Staincliffe, that you are mistaken in the conducting of one part of your business,—nothing worse than that,

—and I would like you to reconsider your position.”

“My business is mine, sir, and I allow no one to interfere with it,” said Mr. Staincliffe, in angry tones.

This sharp retort struck fire out of the rocky nature of the Cornishman. “And my business is mine,” he replied. “I am a minister of religion, your accepted minister hitherto, set to watch over your religious welfare, and it is my duty to warn you whenever I see you entering upon perilous ways, either in your business or any other department of your life,—to warn you faithfully, and I have done it.” In solemn earnestness Mr. Tremayne continued, “I must render my account to my Master and yours, by-and-by, and I would be clear of all blame in regard to your action.”

Mr. Staincliffe hesitated for a moment, and in another moment was gone.

The minister sat down at his desk, and buried his face in his hands. He remained in this posture for some time; then he arose, and looked long and tenderly into the sweet woman’s face pictured above the mantel-piece. Suggestions as to the expediency of allowing Mr. Staincliffe to resign had crossed his mind once or twice during the conversation. He had half thought that it might be better to persuade Robert Cresswell to apologize, and Mr. Staincliffe to accept the apology, and retain his office and membership. Mr. Staincliffe was a man of good social standing, and substantial means, and he was tempted to keep him even at the cost of principle.

He had not revealed this by look or gesture to Mr. Staincliffe. He had fought against it. But the struggle had to be gone through again, and in sharper fashion, after Mr. Staincliffe had left; and with his head bowed upon his desk, he entered the conflict, and came out of it victorious. It was the consciousness of the approval of her to whom that face belonged—his sainted wife—that led him, when the conflict was over, to look long and tenderly at the picture, and thank God that her memory had once more helped him to walk in the right way.

* * * * *

Mr. Staincliffe sat moodily in his private office. He was annoyed at the result of his interview with Mr. Tremayne. He could not complacently contemplate withdrawal from the church with which he had been connected for so many years. His father had been the prime mover, and the main donor, in the erection of the sanctuary in which the church now worshipped, and the name of Staincliffe had become closely associated with it and with all its enterprises. He had quite decided to leave, and although his decision had been shaken a little by Mr. Tremayne's closing words, it had regained its strength while returning to the office.

"Father," said Herbert, entering the private room, "Tom Cresswell called while you were out. He wants to see you!"

"What about?"

"I don't know. He seemed rather disappointed

at not seeing you. He said he would call again about one o'clock."

Mr. Staincliffe turned to his desk, and began to busy himself with his papers. Herbert quietly left the room. At five minutes to one Tom made his appearance.

"Is Mr. Staincliffe in, Herbert?"

"Yes, Tom; he's in, and he's very grumpy. He was looking like a thundercloud a little while ago."

"Has he been put out about something?"

"I should think so. He was away nearly all the morning—went away thoughtful, and came back vexed. I hope you'll find him in a more amiable temper. Shall I tell him you are here?"

"If you please, Herbert."

Tom was soon standing in Mr. Staincliffe's presence. He could see at once that Herbert's description of him was correct, and he would much rather have deferred his business, if that had been possible, until he could have seen him under more favorable circumstances. But here he was, with no other business on hand, and therefore he had to go through with it.

"What can I do for you?" asked Mr. Staincliffe, without asking him to sit down, and as if the sooner he was gone out the better.

"I would like to have a few words with you about Lizzie."

"And what about Lizzie?"

"I would like your assent to an engagement between Lizzie and myself, Mr. Staincliffe, and your permission to visit Deerhill." Tom's face flushed,

and Mr. Staincliffe's settled into sterner lines. "We have known each other for a long time, and Lizzie herself is quite willing that the engagement should be made. It is with her approval that I have sought this interview."

There was a painful silence. Mr. Staincliffe sat perfectly still a few moments, as if listening for what Tom had further to say. Then he glanced sharply into Tom's face, and Tom said,—

"I hope you have no objection."

"But I have a strong objection. I want no alliance between any member of my family and a Cresswell." Tom's face burned. An indignant answer sprang to his lips, and almost forced itself into utterance. "Differences have arisen between your family and mine," continued Mr. Staincliffe, "which would effectually prevent any union between them; even if union had at any time been possible, Lizzie must look higher than you." Tom's cheeks were tingling with resentment, and he pressed his fingers into his palms to keep himself from bursting forth in passionate reply. "I will inform Lizzie of the result of our interview, as you say it has been sought with her approval, and I would thank you, after this, not to thrust your companionship on her, but leave her alone, and go your own way."

He walked to the door, and opened it, for Tom to pass out.

"What you have said has been a surprise, and a grief, to me," said Tom, standing still, and looking intently at Mr. Staincliffe. "I have never thrust

my companionship upon Lizzie, and you need have no fear that I shall. I am sorry that any differences between you and my father should have made you think that the Cresswells are not the equals, in everything except money, of the Staincliffes. This is an objection I never dreamed of, and which I believe you will relinquish when you are in a better frame of mind. I do not despair of securing Lizzie's hand some time, although you refuse to recognize our engagement now."

Tom left with a sad heart. The clerks were at dinner, and Herbert had gone into the town, so that no one saw him as he passed through the large office, and into the street. He hurried home, wondering how Lizzie would receive the news, and whether she would give him an opportunity of making any necessary explanations before they submitted to the parting which Mr. Staincliffe's objection imposed.

CHAPTER IX.

BROKEN BANDS.

THE Staincliffes left the Methodist chapel. Mr. Staincliffe himself found it a harder wrench than he had anticipated, but when the wrench was over, and he was quite away, he tried to forget the place and its associations, and bear himself toward it and its people as if he had never been connected with them. Herbert and Isabel offered no opposition, but contentedly accepted the change, and considered themselves thenceforth as Church people. Mrs. Staincliffe was against the removal. She spoke to her husband about it, advised him to overlook Robert Cresswell's references, and continue in office and membership at the place with which he had been associated all his days. Before her marriage she had attended church. Her sympathies were not strongly Nonconformist. She loved the Church service, and went to church occasionally after her marriage, but she now wished her husband to remain at the chapel, because she feared, particularly for him and Herbert, the loosing of any religious bond. Personal preference made the change agreeable to her, but she cared more for the welfare of her husband and children than her own gratification, and was ever ready to subordinate her wishes to their good. When Mr. Staincliffe, however, showed himself thoroughly determined to leave the chapel,

she acquiesced, and did her utmost to induce his regular attendance at Brindley village church.

The grandmother absolutely refused to break with the old place. She had been a member for fifty years. Born and reared in Methodism, her whole life spent within the circle of its influences, she had no taste for other communions, and would have felt lost at the church. She quietly deplored the differences which had arisen to occasion her son's removal, without really knowing what the differences were. She reminded him of the memories by which the place had become endeared to her. She uttered a mild protest against his removal. She pointed out to him the duty of forgiveness. When she saw it was no use, she submitted to the inevitable, so far as the rest of the family were concerned, but maintained her own right to continue in association with the people among whom she had spent all her days. Six months after the removal, she passed peacefully away, and with her burial (for her request that Mr. Tremayne should officiate at her funeral was faithfully observed)—the last tie was snapped between Deerhill and Methodism.

The main difficulty was with Lizzie. To her the blow was a double one, for her father conveyed to her at the same time his wish that she should leave the Sunday-school, and his refusal to allow the engagement between her and Tom Cresswell. Her face grew very pale, and her brow contracted as if in physical pain.

“I cannot understand it, father,” said she. “If you forbid my engagement with Tom, I must obey

you," and her voice sank almost to a whisper, "but I do not know why you should forbid it." Mr. Staincliffe made no reply, and she continued, in tremulous tones, and with tears in her eyes, "But the Sunday-school: to leave that would be a great grief to me."

"I will not insist upon your leaving the Sunday-school, Lizzie. Only I would rather you did leave."

"Why, father?"

"Because I have been obliged myself to withdraw from the chapel, and intend, with your mother, and Herbert and Belle, attending Brindley Church, I would like us all to go to the same place."

"I might go with you to Brindley Church for the services, and still attend the Sunday-school at Sunnybank in the afternoons."

"That would be too much for you, Lizzie. Brindley Church is in the opposite direction, and to attend both would make Sunday a very hard day for you."

"I would not mind that, father, if you would give me your consent."

"There is a Sunday-school connected with Brindley Church. Why not become a teacher there?"

"I am organist at Sunnybank, father. The class I teach has been mine a long time, and the girls are attached to me. Some of them belong to homes where it is a continual struggle for them to do right, and they depend upon me for help; and if I were gone, I am afraid they would give up the struggle, and become, like those about them, careless and

wicked. Then I have charge of the preparatory class for the examination. And I am on the library committee, and secretary of the sewing meeting, and, oh, dear! I don't know what beside. It would be very hard to leave, father."

"Please yourself, Lizzie. You may stay if you like. But my wish is to sever the family from all connection with the place."

"I would not oppose your wish, father, and yet I should like to attend Sunnybank if it were possible."

The result was that Lizzie continued to teach at Sunnybank for several weeks, but found that it was displeasing to her father, and not much favored by the rest of the family. The grandmother was the only exception. Mrs. Staincliffe thought that Lizzie might be as useful at Brindley Sunday-school as at Sunnybank, and would rather have had her entirely with them. So Lizzie sorrowfully withdrew from the place she loved, unable to make the explanations which would have revealed dissension in the feelings of the family, and yet which her fellow teachers surmised, and devoted herself to the Sunday-school at Brindley, being welcomed there as a valuable acquisition, and speedily winning her way to the hearts of all.

It may seem strange that Lizzie gave up, without any contention, the idea of a sanctioned engagement with Tom Cresswell. But she and Tom had talked the matter over. She had met Tom on the very evening of his interview with Mr. Staincliffe. They were both in attendance at a library committee

meeting at the school, and it was only natural for Lizzie to want to know what kind of a reception Tom had met with on a quest so important to her future happiness. She was astounded at what Tom told her. She could see no reason for her father's refusal. She was inclined to be rebellious to parental authority for the first time since her childhood. When the rebellious feeling faded her eyes filled with tears, and she looked pathetically at Tom. But his face was calm. He seemed not in the least degree disturbed. He said the opposition could not last. Her father was prejudiced against him from special causes that were strongly operating, causes which he could not fully discover, but which he felt sure would pass away. They were young. They were true to each other. They could wait. Lizzie gathered courage from Tom's confidence, their love was tenderly re-plighted, and, hopeful young souls that they were, they looked forward to the time when their secret affection would be openly recognized.

The changes in the domestic and social life of the Staincliffe's were against their real welfare. The effect was manifest in the conduct of Mr. Staincliffe himself. His close connection, by official position and membership, with a place of worship where religion in its stricter forms was professed and generally observed, was a controlling influence, keeping him within bounds in many ways. The influence was supplemented by his mother's presence and example. He had a fair regard for the claims of the church to consistency in Christian behavior. He

would have shrunk from causing pain to his mother by any action contradictory to the profession of a religious life. But these bonds were broken. He was no longer identified by membership with any church. The presence of his mother was not there now to exercise a wholesome restraint upon his actions. He was oftener in the company of men from whom he had hitherto held aloof. He visited more frequently the leading hotels in the town, ostensibly for business purposes, but really for the sake of the people to be met there, and the opportunity afforded by the visit of obtaining a view into transactions which he found to be increasingly attractive. It began to be whispered in the inner mercantile centers of the town that John Staincliffe was tempted to indulge in risky speculations ; that, if he did not mind, he would burn his fingers ; and that certain trust moneys placed in his hands by different people, because of his good name, and long association with one of the leading places of worship, were not over and above safe. He was on a slippery incline, and the bands that would have held him, and saved him, were broken, and mainly broken by his own hands.

All this was not commonly known. Only a few noticed it. To the mass of the people John Staincliffe was still the same, and could be trusted by the majority with almost any sum. His word was accepted without question. There were evidences in his behavior which indicated a freer kind of life. Some regarded this as an improvement,—the natural consequence of his withdrawal from Methodism. He

had been too strait-laced to please them. The social side of his nature would now develop, and, in thought and feeling, he would become a more generous man. His wife was not satisfied with the change. To her these evidences indicated not freedom, but looseness. She would rather her husband had held to his old life. She saw the exciting effects of his speculations, although she knew next to nothing about them, and she regretted that the company he now cultivated took him away much more than formerly from home.

It was commonly known that Herbert was becoming a fast young man. The result of these broken bands were very apparent in his life. He had felt the restriction of the family connection with Methodism, and his own occasional attendance at the Sunday-school. He had tenderly revered his grandmother, and the thought of her disapproval had kept him out of many a snare. Now that she was gone, and the only religious ties which he had definitely acknowledged were snapped, he felt more free to follow the bent of his evil inclinations.

Dempster's influence over him had grown greatly. It had become a customary thing, week by week, to bet upon sports of all kinds, and to straighten off the accounts quarterly, when Herbert's allowance was due. Sometimes Herbert had money to draw, but oftener his money found its way into Dempster's pocket. Not only with Dempster, but with others to whom Dempster introduced him, Herbert regularly betted, and for this purpose was in the habit of visiting the "Green Dragon," the rendezvous of the

gamblers and sporting men of the town. Here he met Dick Pashley, and several other old school-mates, now grown into fast young men; and, in addition to gambling, Herbert indulged in liquor, and went home occasionally so nearly intoxicated as to awaken the suspicion of his mother and sisters concerning his habits and company.

He was on the downward path, and it was easy going. The influences that would have restrained him were removed. The gradient became steeper, and every month the speed of his descent was accelerated. He became more and more careless. His father was not deeply concerned about him, because he did not see how far he had already gone. He thought that the course he was pursuing was entered upon by most young men who had money enough to do it, and that, after tasting his folly, the experience would be a greater safeguard to him in the future. His own looser life blinded him to the serious peril in which his son was placed, and led him silently to excuse what at one time he would have loudly condemned. Mrs. Staincliffe was very anxious about Herbert. She saw more than the father, and feared greatly that Herbert was hastening into bad ways. The late home-coming, the untidy appearance, the smell of smoke and liquor, the morning headaches and loss of appetite, the waning pleasure in innocent pastimes, the uneven temper, the disinclination to confidential talk, the lack of consideration for herself and his two sisters, the hardening selfishness of his disposition, the departed freshness and bloom of his young nature,—these, and other matters, his

mother noticed. She grieved quietly at the alteration, and prayed that God would restore him to his former self and ways.

CHAPTER X.

THE "GREEN DRAGON."

THE "Green Dragon" was an old-fashioned building, with peaked and projecting gables, diamond-paned casement windows, a low, wide doorway sunk two steps below the street, and an external appearance of respectable dinginess which belied the anything but respectable dinginess within. It was a house with a multitude of small, angular, queer-shaped rooms, insufficiently lighted, with low ceilings of oak, darkened by smoke and age. It had been an important hotel once, when Easingholme was a little country town, and knew nothing of the outside world but what the stage-coach brought twice a week, as it pulled up to change horses at the "Green Dragon." Since the railway was made, however, and Easingholme had grown into a thriving commercial center, the "Green Dragon" had been pushed back and back by the new streets and the large ware houses, and had deteriorated so rapidly, morally as well as in other ways, that it was now one of the most shady houses in the town.

Its out-of-the-way situation, and the awkward arrangement of its numerous rooms, made it a convenient place for the gathering of the fraternity who get their living by piracy upon their fellow-men. They could be secluded for gambling purposes in one or another of the rooms, and, should the police

make their appearance, or any suspected stranger, who might have come to pry into the secrets of the place, timely notice could be given, the cards could be hidden, and those who wished could safely make their escape.

A noisy company was assembled at the "Green Dragon." Four or five had been lingering about the place all day; killing time by looking at dogs, mostly cropped-eared bull and terriers and gaunt greyhounds, and sauntering in and out of the stable, where two ponies and one large brown mare were fastened in their stalls. As evening approached, and one after another began to drop in, they made their way to a room in the second story and at the back of the building. Glasses were brought, pipes were lit, greasy cards were circulated, the talk grew louder and the spirits of the company more hilarious.

"That was a queer cove we had in the railway train, Jim," said one.

"Ay," said Jim, with an oath which was frequently upon the lips of the whole company.

"Who was it, Zachy?" shouted a rough young fellow from across the room.

"How do I know!" said Zachy. "But he was a rum cove, and no mistake. I thought he was a parson at first, but I don't believe he was. He'd too much sense for a parson," at which statement most of the company burst into loud laughter.

"What about him, Zachy? Come, let's hear, if it's worth hearin'!" shouted the same young fellow.

"Keep thee tongue still till this game's out, and

then," said Zachy; and having finished the game, and seen the stakes swept into the hand of a companion, he commenced his tale, often interrupting its course by senseless and shocking oaths.

"Jim, and Will Dander, and myself made up a little sharpening party last Friday, and took tickets from Saxby to Eltonburn, thinking to do a bit of business on the line. At Spen Junction, the first stopping-place, in jumps this cove, with a Quaker hat, and a short, black jacket, and grey eyes that twinkled deep down in his head like the eyes of a hawk. He had red, bushy whiskers, and was big enough to pitch us all three out of the winder. He seemed poor game, but we had to try him or nobody. I tipped the wink to Dander, and he drew out the cards and laid them on his knee, and axed, liker Dander does ax, with a face as solid as cast-iron, and as if we was the biggest strangers in the world, if we would join him in a friendly game. 'Don't mind much,' said I; 'what do you say?' turning to Jim; but Jim wouldn't. No! not by no manner o' means. Jim was too religious like; didn't believe in it; and all that. But at last he gave in. Dander looked at the cove with the grey eyes, and said, 'You'll take a hand, guv'nor?' 'No,' said he, shaking his big beard, and smiling under his moustache. 'For tanners?' said Dander, fixing low enough to draw the cove on, but he said 'No!' again. 'Why, you might win,' said Dander. 'Yes,' said he, 'and then somebody would lose, and I should have given him nothing for his money.' Dander was taken aback, and said, 'Nothing for

his money! What do you mean?' 'I'm a tradesman,' said he, 'and when I get money from anyone, I give them something for it, something likely, something worth the money I get. Here's a suit of clothes,' said he, pointin' to a parcel by his side. 'A man will give me two pounds ten to-day, and he'll get these in return. If I took his money, and he didn't get these, I should be a big rogue, shouldn't I?' and he looked at Jim and me, and we laughed. 'No! no!' he said, 'it wouldn't be fair for me to play and win; and I am sure it wouldn't be fair for me to play and lose,' and the cove shook his big beard again, and smiled under his moustache. We knew by his grey eyes that it was no go, and Dander slipped back the cards into his pocket. He was a rum cove, wasn't he?"

The company expressed their satisfaction at the story by a loud peal of laughter, and settled again to their gambling, smoking, and drinking.

"I say, Zachy," said Jim, in an undertone, "is Sol comin' to-night?"

"Ay, and Quance from London. He has game in this neighborhood," responded Zachy.

"How did Sol and Quance get together?"

"Sol picked him up at Westonleigh. They went shares. Sol brought the fish to the net, and Quance cooked 'em."

"Will young Staincliffe come with 'em? He owes me a fiver, and I could do with it," said Jim.

"If he doesn't come with 'em, he'll come after," said Zachy. "Hallo! here they are!"

There was a stir in the room as Dempster walked

in with a companion not known to them all. The companion, a slim, undersized man, in a cut-away coat, fancy waistcoat, tight-fitting check trousers, light brown gaiters and patent leather boots, with an abundance of dirty linen on his narrow chest and around his thin, bony wrists, attracted general attention, and his attire would certainly have provoked laughter but for a certain knowing look upon his clean shaven face which commanded the admiration of the company. It was a face in which the boyish appearance had been arrested before it had quite faded away, and yet in which dwelt the expression of a hardened and shameless manhood,—one of those peculiar faces that never indicate a man's age. Quance might have been any age between twenty-five and fifty, and it was partly this uncertain age, with the experience that might be behind it, that gave him his position among the sporting class to which he belonged.

He recognized Jim and Zachy, and greeted them by an odd contortion of one side of his face. He went across the room, and sat down beside them. Dempster joined another group, at a table where Dick Pashley was loudly boasting about his money and skill, as if both were inexhaustible. He soon drew Dick, and two others, who were perfectly willing, because of Dick's halfintoxicated condition, to try their skill against his, and line their pockets with his money, into an absorbing game. While they were thus busily engaged, Herbert Staincliffe came in, and answered Quance's call by seating himself at the same table.

"You'll have a drink, Staincliffe?" said Quance.

"Cannot do much without," said Herbert, as he handed his cigar-case to the three, and then took a cigar himself.

Quance beckoned the waiter, and ordered for the four, pressing his hand as he gave the order. Glasses were brought, and brandy placed before Herbert, whisky before Jim and Zachy, and a clear, colorless liquid before Quance. Hot water was added to the drinks of the three, and Quance added cold to his.

"What do you drink, Quance?"

"Gin," he replied, with a straight look at Herbert, intended to quiet suspicion. "I always drink gin. It's my favorite beverage."

The cards were dealt out, Quance exhibiting particular skill in handling them both then and afterwards. The money was staked, and won; and new stakes were put down, and won; Herbert sweeping both into his palm, and drinking the more freely because luck was with him. The game deepened in interest, the stakes grew higher, and now Jim, now Quance, now Zachy gathered up the coins, Herbert only winning occasionally, until, twice out of three, Quance was the fortunate man. Herbert drained one glass after another unthinkingly, and became terribly excited; Jim and Zachy drank freely, but, being used to it, kept their heads fairly well; while Quance sipped away, and played on as cool as if it were the ordinary business of his life. Herbert's cash was getting low, and he was about staking all he had left in a final game, when

the whole company was startled by a loud roar from Dick Pashley, who jumped from his seat, swore at Dempster, calling him all the vile and ugly names he could think of, and then rushed round the table intending to strike him to the floor. But Dick was very unsteady. One of the company thrust out his leg, and Dick fell over it, striking his head against the table. He was quiet enough now, and the man who had tripped him up, said,—

“Here, waiter; drag Dick out, and pack him off in a cab to the ‘Talbot.’ You may find a ‘bob’ in his pocket for your trouble.”

While Dick was being removed, Dempster came slowly across the room to Herbert, and watched him play his cards. He lost the stakes, and the money went into Quance’s pocket.

“There,” he hiccupped. “I’m cleared out. Can you lend me a trifle, Dempster?”

“How much do you want?”

“Lend me ten pounds.”

It was counted into his hand and the game began again. Herbert continued drinking, played more and more recklessly, and the ten pounds speedily vanished. He looked fiercely at Quance, whose coolness struck even his dulled senses as unnatural. Before his hand could be arrested he had picked up Quance’s glass and drunk off its contents, and, maddened to find that Quance had been drinking not gin, but water, and taking advantage of his intoxication to win his money, he dashed the glass into Quance’s face. The sharp edge of the glass struck him on the cheek-bone. With the blood

trickling down his cheek, he leaped towards Herbert, and dealt him several heavy blows. Herbert, though wild with passion, was incapable of self-defence, and soon, by the help of Dempster, had to be carried downstairs. Cold water was thrown into his face to sober him, and cleanse away the dust; and, when sufficiently steady for the journey, Dempster saw him out of the town, and part of the way to Deerhill.

Lizzie and Isabel sat up that night waiting for him. Mr. and Mrs. Staincliffe had retired to their bedroom—the mother after waiting an hour, and waiting in vain. Hitherto she had stayed until he came, however late it was, but to-night she was wearied, and he was much later than usual. He had often come home with a wild look in his eyes, and a trifle unsteady in his gait, but never quite intoxicated; and Mrs. Staincliffe had not even the shadow of a thought as to his condition to-night, or she would not have left the two girls up to receive him.

“Go to bed, mother,” said Belle, “we’ll wait for him.”

“I think I will, my dear,” said the mother. “I feel very tired.”

“You look tired,” Belle replied, kissing her.

“He won’t be long now. Don’t bother him when he comes. Let him go quietly upstairs. And then you get off to bed as quickly as you can,” said the mother, hoping he would not be so bad as she had seen him, and that his sisters would not discover he had been drinking.

"Good night, mother," said Lizzie, pathetically kissing her on both cheeks, for Lizzie had divined the mother's meaning.

"Good-night," said Belle, kissing her again, and lightly, for Belle had no idea that the mother wished to hide anything from them concerning their wayward brother.

Midnight came, and Belle shivered. She had been reading and nodding by the fire, and the fire had burned low. Lizzie was writing at the table.

"How cold it is!" said Belle. "What on earth can be keeping Herbert till this time?"

Lizzie went on with her writing, and Belle poked the fire, and returned to the nodding and reading. One o'clock came, and still no sound of Herbert. At a quarter-past one Scamp's deep bark resounded through the yard, and softened down into a mournful whine, as stumbling steps were heard approaching the door. As Lizzie went to open the door she heard a drunken oath thrown at the dog, which prepared her for Herbert's appearance; and yet, when she opened the door, and the light streamed out upon him, she was shocked to see his dirty, blood-stained, besotted form. She involuntarily cried out,—

"Oh! Herbert!"

"What's the matter?" said Belle, running to the door. When she saw her brother, she was like one stunned by a blow.

"Aren't you going to let me in?" said Herbert, stammeringly, and with thick utterance.

They stepped aside, and he staggered through

the vestibule, and into the dining-room. Closing the door, they followed him, and found him in an easy-chair.

"I am very poorly, Lizzie," he said, rolling his head about, which was bruised and swollen, partly by Quance's blows, and partly by two or three falls on the way home. "Is there any brandy in the decanter?"

"You must go to bed, Herbert," said Lizzie, and after looking stupidly at the two sad faces for a little while, he seemed dimly to realize that he presented a painful spectacle, and that they were inexpressibly shocked at his condition. He submitted to be led upstairs, his sisters supporting him on both sides, and was soon heavily sleeping in his bedroom.

Belle had not spoken since she saw him at the door. She now asked,—

"Did you expect this, Lizzie?"

"No, my dear," said Lizzie, bursting into tears, "not all this, but I knew that Herbert had not been steady lately."

Belle did not weep. Her surprised and anxious face became fixed and stern, as she said,—

"What a fool he is! I'll tell him what I think about him to-morrow. I'm so glad mother didn't see him. If he has a conscience anywhere, I'll find it, and make him so thoroughly ashamed of himself, that I hope he'll never come home again in that condition. We mustn't tell mother, Lizzie. We must keep it to ourselves."

"Nay, not to ourselves, Belle," responded Lizzie. "We must tell One about it, who can hear us

when we pray, and who can help us when we try to save Herbert from this terrible sin. If we both pray, Belle," and she put her arm about her sister's neck, and, drawing her close, tenderly kissed her, "and if we both try very hard to save him, we may do it; and then mother need never know about to-night."

Belle's fixed and stern face relaxed, and there crept into her eyes the soft look of loving pity.

CHAPTER XI.

DUNSFORD RACES.

BELLE was true to her word. The loving pity awakened by Lizzie's appeal did not quite pass away. Beneath the bitter reflection on Herbert's wickedness during the remainder of the night—for Belle slept little—she became stern again, and resolved, though there was compassion in the resolve, to talk plainly to him in the morning. When she saw him in the morning, with his heavy eyes, and countenance held down in shame, and to conceal the marks of bruises here and there, fingering his bread and butter, but not eating it, a picture of misery, her compassion increased; not so much, however, as to interfere with the resolve she had formed of giving him a piece of her mind.

As he went down the drive, on his way to business, she followed him.

"You were in a nice pickle when you came home last night, Herbert." He made no answer. "Whatever were you doing to get into that state?"

"Hold your tongue, Belle. It is no business of yours."

"I shall not hold my tongue, and it is business of mine. You cannot make a fool of yourself without becoming a disgrace to the family. If anyone saw you last night, they wouldn't think of you simply, but of us, and of you as the heir of Deerhill. A smart

man you will be to carry forward the family fortunes." Herbert's brow contracted beneath the taunt, and he bit his lips savagely. "Supposing mother had been up last night!" continued Belle. "It was a good thing she had retired, and did not see you; but she must have noticed your handsome looks this morning."

"Belle! be quiet," said he, with an impatient movement of his hand, and an expression of pain upon his face.

Belle looked at him, and her resolve melted away. The tears welled up, and she said,—

"Oh, Herbert, I'm very, very sorry. You must forgive me. But I was grieved, deeply grieved to see you last night. You'll be a better man, I know. Good-bye!" and she held up her face, and Herbert hastily kissed her.

As he walked into Easingholme, he thought over Belle's words, and, notwithstanding her sudden change of feeling, allowed the words to make him harder and more sullen. He entered the office in a very rebellious mood—disinclined for work, and out of joint with all his duties. His father had preceded him to business, and, as he passed out of the office to an engagement in the town, he looked at Herbert reproachfully, but said nothing. Herbert did not know whether his father was aware of his condition the night before, and therefore could not tell all that was conveyed by that reproachful look. The uncertainty made him more rebellious. The father had no idea that Herbert had come home intoxicated. He was simply displeased at his late

arrival home the previous evening, and now at his late arrival at business—habits which were not likely to fit his son for the anticipated successful career.

After Mr. Staincliffe had left the office, Dempster came round the partition, and said,—

“What do you say to a visit to Dunsford to-morrow?”

“Are you going?”

“If I can get leave.”

“You’ll not get leave to attend the races.”

“I can make other business,” said Dempster, with a leer. “I have a sick grandmother in Dunsford. Will you go?”

“What time do you start?”

“By the eight-thirty.”

“I’ll be there,” and Herbert turned to his desk, and opened the ledger, under the pretence of making an entry.

Herbert lingered behind that evening until his father and the cashier had gone. Twoose was in the office addressing letters, the office lad was waiting to take them to the post, but no one else was on the premises. Herbert entered his father’s private apartment, and Twoose, having already noticed that Herbert had lingered behind, and, on the alert for anything unusual, heard the click of a lock twice. When Herbert came out, and went away, Twoose was still busy with his letters, and did not betray the slightest suspicion of Herbert’s proceedings. He had carefully dotted down everything on the tablet of his retentive memory, nevertheless,

For some time Herbert had not spent a whole evening at home. His early return, and inclination to remain, were a welcome sign to his mother and sisters. The mother joined in a game of lawn tennis, and she and Herbert played the two sisters. Belle was as gracious as she could be, and in many little affectionate ways tried to atone for what she had said in the morning. Lizzie bestowed her sweetest smiles upon him, while she vigorously replied to his dealing across the netted lawn, and in her unobtrusive fashion, and by playing her best—for he liked good playing—showed how much she appreciated his presence at home. His mother seconded his efforts right well, winning his commendation, and eliciting frequent playful comparisons between her angility and that of her daughters, to her own praise; and, as they went in, she quietly expressed the pleasure it had given her to have him with them all the evening, and hoped he would favor them oftener with his company.

And how did Herbert feel under all this? He responded to it as well as he could. He tried to forget yesterday. He would not allow himself to think about to-morrow. He gave himself up to the delightful sensation of being admired and entertained by the loving trio, but there was the feeling behind it all that he was not worthy of their affectionate endeavors, and that their endeavors were an innocent subterfuge to cover their remembrance and forgiveness of the night before. There was also the intention of grieving them still further by his conduct on the morrow, and bringing a still greater shame upon

them—an intention not mentally asserting itself while the play was going on, and yet of which he was sufficiently conscious to feel uneasy in pleasantly receiving their attentions. He felt more like a hypocrite than ever he had done before.

Next morning at eight-thirty he was at the station. Several of his sporting acquaintances nodded their recognitions, and then winked slyly at each other. Dempster was looking out for him, they entered a carriage together, and were soon whirling away, amid the noisy talk of a motley company, to their destination.

As Herbert stepped outside Dunsford Station, and the familiar buildings met his eye, he thought of Kate, and wondered whether he should meet her to-day. Dempster hailed a hansom, and the thought of Kate was driven from Herbert's mind by the bustle of the crowded streets on the way to the course, and, while on the course, by the excitement attending the races. The grand stand was filled. Ladies of rank, representing the very flower of fashion, formed in groups, and flitted to and fro among their friends, giving to the raised platform a gay and animated appearance. Gentlemen of nobility and wealth, many well-known in high political circles, some connected with leading educational establishments, a few associated with literature and art, and among them a sprinkling of successful commercial men, discussed with each other the probabilities of the day. The edge of the course was lined with thousands of people, all more or less personally interested in the races; carriages were

drawn up here and there, with fair occupants reclining in them, or standing erect to examine through binoculars other fair occupants in carriages on the opposite side; and, further back, out of the press, itinerant showmen of various kinds, from the acrobat who can carry all his belongings under his arm, with the exception of the two slight children that follow him, or the set of poodle dogs that trot by his side, to the proprietor of the gilded caravan, with the spacious canvas tent behind, and the variety entertainment to suit all comers. A few gipsy women, with their restless black eyes searching everywhere, were to be seen—their tents were away on the sheltered corner of a neighboring common; and men of an uneasy countenance, with a propensity to plant a campstool, and suddenly gather a company about them, moved in and out of the crowds, among which latter Herbert recognized his acquaintance of the “Green Dragon”—Quance, from London.

Drinking places were abundant, and into one of these Herbert and Dempster went soon after reaching the course. By noon Herbert was intoxicated. He was not in a fit condition to handle money, and, because of recent losses, he had not much to handle. He had already staked more than he was worth. Upon coming into the open air, and mingling with the excited crowds, he caught the prevailing fever, and began to boast about his ventures on this horse and that. Dempster introduced him to a friend whom he had met upon the course—Bob Winton, as Dempster familiarly called him—and with this

man Herbert was induced to bet heavily, and to retire with him to one of the drinking places to cement their transactions and to increase their good fellowship. Here Dempster left him. He had other work in hand, partly in conjunction with Quance and partly on his own account. He had obtained as much out of Herbert as he could well get, and Herbert's intoxicated and excited condition would have hindered him in carrying out his plans.

When Winton left, Herbert persisted in accompanying him. Winton tried to dodge him several times, but Herbert kept his eyes on him, and dived after him through the crowds, until they came beside a waggonette in which were a party of ladies and gentlemen. Affecting not to notice Herbert, as if he did not know him, and as if Herbert had accidentally wandered there in his intoxication, Winton began to converse with the occupants of the vehicle. A voice fell on Herbert's ears which caused him to start and look up; and then say,—

“Hal—loa! Kate! you here. How are you?”

Kate looked down in surprise. Her face grew sad. She bent down to him, and said,—

“Herbert! I am very sorry to see you like this.”

“Wh—y! what's the matter, Kate?” he stammered.

“I think you had better leave the course, and go home.”

“Not I,” said Herbert, with a laugh. “Haven't I come to s—ee the races? And I won't go home

until I've lined my pockets well. Here's Winton, I shall want nearly fifty pounds from him."

Kate looked sharply round at Winton. During her conversation with Herbert she had felt that the eyes of the waggonette party were on her. The



color had mounted to her cheeks, and she had bent low to whisper to Herbert. Now, when Winton's name was mentioned, she looked sharply round, and said,—

"Mr. Winton, do you know this gentleman?"

"Not very well. Not so well as you, apparently,"

which brought the color back again to Kate's cheeks. "I was introduced to him by Dempster a little while ago."

"By Dempster!" said Kate, arching her eyebrows. Then, in an altered and serious tone, "Will you oblige me, Mr. Winton?"

"In what way, Miss Fairfax?"

"By persuading this gentleman to leave the course, and seeing him safely in the train to Easingholme."

"With pleasure, if the gentleman will go."

"Allow Mr. Winton to see you away, Herbert, will you?"

"What! Before the races are over! No, Kate. I've come to s—ee the races, and to take money back with me!"

"We could accomodate him in the waggonette, Miss Fairfax, if you wish it," said a young man, bending to whisper to her; but before she could reply, the attention of the whole party was arrested by a ringing cheer. She turned to the course, with the rest, and watched the horses sweep along in the last and most important race of the day; only for a few moments was she carried away by the excitement; and, while the others were yet straining their eyes to see the horses round the curve in the distance, she turned again to find Herbert, but he was gone. The cheer had fired his brain. He had worked his way to the front, and, by the time the horses were in sight again, he was within view of them, and cheering as madly as the maddest.

It was soon over. The crowds began to disperse;

the drinking places began to fill; a general commotion set in; and when it dawned upon Herbert that he had lost his money it went far towards sobering him, and made him think about going home. But Winton was not far away. And Dempster and Quance were both on the look-out for him. They drove into Dunsford, spent the night in a wild carousal, and parted, under promise of meeting next morning at the same hotel to balance the monetary transactions of the day.

There was only one house in Dunsford to which Herbert could go. He never thought about the shock he would give them, or the trouble he would put them to, by presenting himself so late and in an intoxicated condition. If he had not been intoxicated, he would have obtained a bed at the hotel; but he staggered forth, found his way to his Aunt Ellen's, and violently pulled the bell. Kate had not told her mother that she had seen him on the race-course.

Mrs. Fairfax was pained beyond measure at his appearance. The sad looks and silence of Mrs. Fairfax and Kate made some impression even upon his dulled senses. He realized somewhat the state he was in, and, with a stammering excuse, he speedily retired, stumbling upstairs to the bedroom he had occupied during his pleasant visit some time before. He flung himself on the bed, dressed as he was, and fell into a drunken sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

MISSING

ON the day of the Dunsford races Mr. Staincliffe came home to tea. When they were seated at the table, he looked round, and said,—

“Where’s Herbert?”

“He has not come home yet, father,” answered Lizzie.

“Not come home. Why! where has he been?”

“Hasn’t he been at the office?” asked Mrs. Staincliffe.

“No!”

“Then I cannot tell where he is.” Lizzie and Bell exchanged uneasy glances, and the mother continued,—“He left home this morning before you. He had an early breakfast, and hurried away.”

“I haven’t seen his face to-day,” said the father. “He ought to have mentioned it to me if he intended absenting himself from business. Let me know when he comes home.”

The evening passed quietly away. Mr. Staincliffe spent an hour or two reading, and the rest of the time sat at his desk carefully examining a set of papers. At ten o’clock he said,—

“Has Herbert arrived?”

“No!” answered Mrs. Staincliffe.

“He’s very late. Wherever has he gone? We’d better have supper without him, Louey.”

Supper was served and cleared away. Lizzie and Belle chatted together about a new piece of music. Mr. Staincliffe settled down to his reading again. Mrs. Staincliffe was anxious about her son. When the clock struck eleven, Mr. Staincliffe said,—

“No Herbert yet. I must go to bed, and reckon with him in the morning.”

Mrs. Staincliffe sat up very late that night. Her daughters wished her to retire. They said they would wait for Herbert. But she had been suspicious about his home-coming the other evening when the girls had remained up for him, and she feared he might return to-night intoxicated. She could not bear the thought of leaving the girls to receive him in such a condition. So she kindly, but firmly, insisted that they should go to their bedroom, and she would stay and let Herbert in. The girls left her before the dining-room fire. She waited long, the clock striking twelve, then one, and at last she dropped asleep in the chair. She awoke with a start, and heard Scamp in the kitchen barking in a sharp, short way, a kind of half-bark and half-yelp; and she felt afraid for a moment, until she remembered that it was Scamp's habit, while dreaming, to relieve himself in this manner. She looked at the clock. It wanted a quarter to three. Wearily and sadly she sought her room, thinking it was little use waiting longer,—that, wherever Herbert was, he was not likely to return before the dawn of the day.

“What time did Herbert come home last night?” asked Mr. Staincliffe at breakfast next morning.

“He did not come at all,” said his wife.

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Staincliffe, dropping his napkin, and looking in astonishment at his wife’s distressed countenance. “How long did you wait for him, Louey?”

“Until nearly three o’clock.”

“You might well look tired, my dear, stopping up all that time. Have you any idea where he has gone?”

“None whatever.”

“Nor you, girls?”

“No, father,” responded both of them.

“I must make some inquiries about him when I get into town,” said Mr. Staincliffe, and he ate a hurried breakfast, and went off to business earlier than usual.

Upon arriving at the office he glanced round, and saw every clerk in his place except Dempster. He walked forward to his own apartment, and said,—

“Tell Mr. Dempster that I wish to see him.”

“He hasn’t arrived yet, sir,” answered Twoose.

“He should have been here half-an-hour ago. Tell him, when he comes, that I wish to see him at once.”

Dempster did not arrive until after eleven o’clock. Twoose gave him the message. He knocked at Mr. Staincliffe’s apartment, and, in answer to the summons, walked in.

“You’re late this morning,” said Mr. Staincliffe, looking at him sternly.

“Yes, sir.”

“Why?”

"I only came back from Dunsford this morning."

"That is no excuse. You might have been here earlier. Why didn't you return last night?"

"Because I couldn't," he replied, after some hesitation, not knowing what to say.

"Did Herbert go to Dunsford with you yesterday?" asked Mr. Staincliffe, with a keen, and almost piercing, look.

"Yes, sir."

"And you were on the racecourse?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! And where did you leave Herbert last night?"

"What did you say, sir?" asked Dempster, affecting not to have heard him, but really searching his mind for a reply.

"Where did you leave Herbert last night?" repeated Mr. Staincliffe in loud and decided tones.

"In Graham Street."

"You left him in the street. In what part of the street? And at what time?"

"Outside the Graham Hotel, a little after eleven o'clock."

"Haven't you seen him since?"

"No, sir."

"Well, look here, Dempster; if ever you and Herbert go off again on a similar errand, or you yourself are not in your place at the proper time of a morning to do your own work, you will have finished with me. I won't put up with it. You had better take the warning, and mend your ways. That's

all," and he nodded towards the door, through which Dempster was glad to go.

Mr. Staincliffe drove home to luncheon—quite an unusual event, but he was anxious to know whether Herbert had returned. He was still away, however, and his mother and sisters were increasingly concerned about him. Luncheon passed without remark, and Lizzie and Belle went into the drawing-room. When they were gone, Mrs. Staincliffe said,—

"Have you heard anything about him?"

"Yes! He went to Dunsford races with Dempster yesterday. He must be at Ellen's, and will probably come home this evening. We need not trouble much about him now."

"But I cannot help troubling, John. Will you run over to Dunsford, and see if he is there?"

"No, Louey. I do not think it would be wise. Let him come home of himself, and he will be the more likely to remember his folly."

"But won't you wire to Ellen, and ascertain whether he is there?"

"What is the use? He must be either there or on his way home. Don't distress yourself, Louey. He'll come back all right, and if he sees that we are not over anxious about his return it may have a salutary effect upon him."

The day passed, and evening came, without the appearance, or any news about the missing one. Mr. Staincliffe said he would wait up for him, and did not doubt but that he would come. At one o'clock, however, when he had not arrived, he went

to his bedroom, to find his wife awake and alarmed. He quieted her fears by the promise that he would make full inquiries on the morrow. He could not quite conceal his own anxiety. There was very little sleep at Deerhill that night. Lizzie lay thinking about her absent brother. Belle slept, but started in her dreams. Sleep could not allay her concern for her brother. Fantastic impossibilities were conjured up within her brain, and her sleep did her very little good.

In the morning Mr. Staincliffe lingered over his breakfast, and seemed in no hurry to reach the town. He was clinging to the hope that Herbert would come before he started for business, and thereby relieve him from the humiliating necessity of making inquiries about him. When he did start, he allowed Juno to take her own pace, and arrived late at the office.

After he was gone Mrs. Staincliffe called Lizzie into the library.

“We must do something to find Herbert, Lizzie.”

“Yes, mother. What can we do?”

“I want you to go into the town and see Tom Cresswell.” Lizzie’s face flushed, and her heart beat loudly. “You will find him at home about noon. Tell him about Herbert. Let him know everything. And ask him to go over to Dunsford and see Aunt Ellen, and bring Herbert back with him if he finds him there.”

While this conversation was going on, and during Mr. Staincliffe’s drive to town, the manager and two directors of the Easingholme Banking Com-

pany were talking earnestly to each other, and scrutinizing together the signature of a check which the manager held in his hands. Tom Cresswell was working at a desk a few paces away, and could not help overhearing a part of what was said.

"I fear it is the son's doing," said the manager.

"What a pity!" returned one of the directors. "I have often noticed him, and thought him a fine young fellow."

"Yes! it is a pity," said the other director. "Gambling is at the bottom of it, I feel sure. And I am sorry that Staincliffe himself is not so careful as he once was. He will go the wrong way if he does not mind."

"You don't mean to say that Staincliffe gambles, do you?"

"Not in the ordinary sense, but I have reason to believe that he is being rather deeply drawn in by a not very respectable firm on Stock Exchange transactions." Here the director's voice dropped to a whisper, and Tom only heard an occasional word or two, as "trust moneys," "no scrip," "kept secret," "a big smash some day." The director again raised his voice, and said, "I suppose we had better send this check to him, and find out whether it is genuine, and, if not, what he intends to do."

"Certainly," replied the manager. "But I feel sure it is not genuine. Cresswell can tell us. He is familiar with the writing of both, and we can trust him. He might take the check down to Mr. Staincliffe." Raising his voice, he said, "Mr.

Cresswell!" Tom came forward. "Will you please look at that check?" Tom examined it. "Whose writing is it?"

"Herbert Staincliffe's."

"You are quite sure about that?"

"Quite."

"And whose signature is it?"

Tom looked at the check again, examined the signature carefully, and then said —

"I do not know."

"Is it Mr. Staincliffe's?"

"No!"

"Is it an imitation of his?"

"Undoubtedly."

"We want you to take the check down to Mr. Staincliffe's office, and show it to him. Do not show it to anyone else. And ask him if the check is to be honored; or whether we are to take means to find out the person in whose favor it is drawn, and ascertain from whom he had it."

Tom presented himself at Mr. Staincliffe's office, and asked if he might see him. The messenger returned to say that Mr. Staincliffe was engaged and would he state his business. Tom replied that his business was private and important, and had no reference to himself. Upon this, he was shown into Mr. Staincliffe's room. Without requesting him to sit down, Mr. Staincliffe asked him what he wanted. He handed him the check, and said,—

"Will you please examine that, Mr. Staincliffe?"

Mr. Staincliffe caught his breath as he glanced at the writing, which he knew at once to be his son's,

and then at the signature, which he also knew was not his own, but a fair imitation.

“Where did you get it?” he asked.

“The check was cashed at Dunsford yesterday, and sent to us this morning. The manager asked me to come down here with it, and ascertain your wishes concerning it.”

“Sit down, Tom. Do you know this man,—Winton?”

“No, sir.”

“Who do you think has signed the check, Tom?”

“I would rather not say. The other part of the check is in Herbert’s hand.”

“It is,” said Mr. Staincliffe; and a spasm, as of physical pain, passed over his countenance. For some minutes he was perfectly quiet. Then he said, “I should not like this mentioned to anyone, Tom. Tell the manager to accept the check as mine, and I will attend to it; and say that I should esteem it a favor if he would consider the matter strictly private.”

When Tom had gone, Mr. Staincliffe sat in a reverie, with a pale face, and hands pressed to his forehead, for a full half-hour. Then he examined the check again, and carefully scrutinized the signature. After that he observed the date, and, unlocking the safe, he took out his check book, and examined it for that date. It seemed all right. But in turning over the duplicates backwardly, he noticed, after the first check drawn for that day, that the book had been tampered with; and on a closer inspection, found that a duplicate had been carefully

extracted. He pondered over this, and, after awhile, rang the bell. When the office boy entered he sent for the cashier.

“Who was left in the office on Tuesday evening?” asked Mr. Staincliffe.

“Twoose, and the office boy,” replied the cashier, after a minute or two’s reflection. “Twoose had a few letters to address, and the boy waited to take them to the post.”

“Send Twoose here, will you?”

Twoose entered.

“Were you last in the office on Tuesday night?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Was there anyone here beside you and the office boy?”

“Mr. Herbert, sir.”

“Did he enter my room?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Was he there long?”

“Not very long, sir. I heard a noise like the opening and shutting of a lock, sir, and soon after that Mr. Herbert came out and went away.”

“That will do. You may return to your work.” And being left alone, Mr. Staincliffe sank into another reverie, with the conviction, not merely the surmise, that this wrong had been done by his son.

Soon after twelve o’clock, while Tom was at home, Lizzie called at Robert Cresswell’s and asked to see Tom. Mrs. Cresswell saw at once that there was something seriously the matter, of which Lizzie’s visit, even without her sad face, would have been sufficient proof. She considerably

busied herself in the kitchen and left the two together.

“Mother has sent me to see you, Tom,” began Lizzie. “We want you to help us. Herbert has been missing since yesterday morning. He went to Dunsford with Dempster, and although Dempster has returned, he has not. Will you go over to Aunt Ellen’s, and ask if Herbert is there; and if he is, bring him home?”

“I will do all I can, Lizzie. But what if he isn’t there?”

“Do your best to find out where he is. We are very anxious about him. Could you go to Dunsford this afternoon, Tom?”

“I think so; and if I do not bring him back with me to-night, I will send you a letter by a messenger in the morning.”

“Thank you, Tom.”

The conversation now ran into general channels. Tom said nothing to Lizzie about the check. He could see she was very much distressed already, and he did not wish to add to her care. She began to talk about Sunnybank School, asking a multitude of questions, and then told Tom about the work she was doing at Brindley. Glancing at the clock, she suddenly wished Tom and his mother “Good-bye,” and hastened away.

Tom had no difficulty in obtaining leave of absence for the afternoon, and was soon ringing Mrs. Fairfax’s bell in Dunsford. He asked for Miss Fairfax, and was shown into the library. When Kate made her appearance, she was surprised to see

him, but treated him with kindly effusion. She asked why he was in Dunsford. She supposed he must be over on business, and was very pleased that he had favored her with a call.

“My business is with you and Mrs. Fairfax.”

“Indeed. Then I am sorry mother is not in,” said Kate; “and I am afraid she won’t be until late this evening.”

“Perhaps you can give me the information I desire.”

“And what is it, pray?”

“Was Herbert Staincliffe here yesterday?”

“He was,” replied Kate, blushing. “And he must have left very early this morning. He was gone before we came down. I suppose he will be at home now.”

“No! that is the reason I am here,” said Tom. “I want to find out where he is. You will pardon me if my questions appear inquisitive.”

“Certainly. But I am afraid I cannot give you any clue as to his whereabouts, if he is not at home,” said Kate, beginning to feel interested in Tom’s mission.

“What time did he come here yesterday?” asked Tom.

“Very late. Between eleven and twelve o’clock.”

“What condition was he in?”

Kate hesitated, and looked painfully at Tom. Then she said, “I would not tell many people, but I dare tell you. I know you have a sincere regard for him, and will keep it a secret. He was intoxicated. I fancy, when he awoke this morning, he

felt ashamed of himself, and so went away without seeing us."

"Have you any idea how he spent the day? What company he was in?"

Again Kate hesitated, and, with rising color, said, "Your questions are very pressing. And not very polite questions to ask of a young lady about an intoxicated man. I might decline to answer them, but——"

"Pardon me, Miss Fairfax. But this is so serious a matter, that I thought little about ceremony."

"Just what I was going to say. We need have no ceremony. I will answer your question. He spent the day on the racecourse, and in not the best of company. He came with my merciless cousin, Dempster, and was introduced by him to others whom he had better not have known."

"Your *merciless* cousin?"

"Yes! you remember how he killed the hedgehog."

"Ah! you have a memory, Miss Fairfax, I see, and penetration too."

"Thank you. I like to understand people."

"Perhaps you can tell me something about someone else," said Tom, having inferred that Kate was on the racecourse, and knew the company Herbert had mixed with. Indeed, it was the reluctance to reveal this, which made Kate hesitate the second time to answer Tom's questions, and to answer them with slight warmth and a touch of resentment; for she knew that Tom would not approve of her presence at the races. "Do you know a Mr. Robert Winton?"

Kate nodded, opened her eyes wide, and wondered where Tom had got that name.

“ Was Herbert introduced to him? ”

“ Yes! ”

“ By whom? ”

“ Dempster. ”

“ And what kind of a man is Winton? ”

“ That is not an easy question to answer, ” said Kate, feeling a little uncomfortable.

“ Is he a betting man? ”

“ Yes. I believe so. ”

“ Did he bet with Herbert? ”

“ I don't know, but I should not be surprised if he did. ”

“ Would he be likely to drink with Herbert? ”

“ Yes! ”

“ And you have no notion whatever where Herbert is now? ”

“ None at all. ”

“ You must excuse this particular questioning, Miss Fairfax, but I have a reason for it. I will not detain you longer. Good-evening! ”

“ Oh! you'll stay to tea, Mr. Cresswell. Do stay! ” and Kate prevailed upon him, and contrived to convey, during tea, the information that she was not in the habit of going to the races, and that Winton was not a well-known acquaintance of hers. She had been persuaded by two lady friends to make one of a party to drive to the course on that day. Winton was invited, too, and they had met then for the first time, although she had seen and heard of him before. She wished to smooth away

from Tom's mind any unfavorable impression caused by the revelation that she was on the course, and knew certain people whom Tom could have no liking for ; and when Tom went away, she said how pleased she had been to see him, and hoped he would write and say whether Herbert had found his way home.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOUND.

WHEN Tom jumped out of the train at Easingholme, he saw a young porter whom he knew very well, having had him in his class at Sunnybank ; and the thought struck him that possibly he would know whether Herbert had arrived from Dunsford.

“John !” said he, arresting the man’s attention, “Has Mr. Herbert Staincliffe come in by any train to-day ?”

“Let me see, Mr. Cresswell,” replied the porter ; then, after a moment’s reflection, “Yes, he came in by the seven twenty-five this evening. And,” lowering his voice, “between you and me, sir, he hardly looked himself,—rather wild about the eyes, and as if he were in trouble.”

“Did he leave the station at once ?”

“Hurried away, sir, and kept his head down, as if he wanted no one to see him. I caught sight of him, and, knowing him well, and noticing that he wasn’t himself I watched him off ; and, thought I, there’s Mr. Herbert Staincliffe, with his heart in his shoes, and a heavy heart too by the way he’s walking.”

“You didn’t notice which way he went after leaving the station, did you, John ?”

“No, Mr. Cresswell ; I only saw him off the

premises, and couldn't leave myself on account of the express being just then due, and I likely to be wanted. Duty first, you know, sir; that's what you taught me at the Sunday-school, and grateful I am to you for it."

"Duty first. That's right, John. Good-night!" and Tom started home, leaving the talkative porter, having obtained the information he required. He thought Herbert must have made his way home, and that the anxiety of the family at Deerhill, by this time, would have been relieved.

He found a messenger for his note next morning in the person of Harry Clough. Since college days, Harry had grown, and become manly in appearance, but he was still small in stature; and, as in his younger days, the muscles of his face were always on the verge of a smile, and the slightest nudge was sufficient to tumble them into it. Harry was of a very happy disposition, with a groundwork of sound common-sense, and an aptitude for persistent application to business; and he seemed likely to become one of the leading tradesmen in Easingholme. On this particular Friday morning, he had been favored with a holiday and Tom asked him to take his letter to Lizzie, and bring back a reply.

Harry was glad to go to Deerhill for reasons of his own. He had met Isabel Staincliffe once at a Brindley Church gathering, and was desirous of meeting her again. A favorite aunt of his, whom he often visited on Sundays, attended Brindley Church, and, being a staunch Churchman himself,

he generally accompanied her, and shared with her any invitations of a social kind connected with the Church life. He had seen Isabel at the service many times, and admired her, and the admiration deepened upon an introduction and the opportunity of a chat. His message to Deerhill might afford him the enjoyment of a few minutes' conversation with Isabel. He thought he would see her, at any rate, and perhaps he might be able to renew and ripen this acquaintance.

He had no idea of the contents of Tom's letter, or else his mind would have been occupied with other thoughts. He asked for Miss Staincliffe, and was shown into the library, where he handed her the letter, and watched her face as she read it; and the sorrowful changing countenance so impressed him that he forgot Isabel, and wondered what was the matter. Tom's letter was as follows:—

“ Dear Lizzie,—I found that Herbert had spent the night at the house of Mrs. Fairfax, and Kate was able to give me information about him which I can tell you when next we meet. Upon reaching Easingholme station I asked John Todd if he had seen Herbert, and was told that he had come in by the 7.25 train. His arrival at Deerhill in the evening would set all your fears at rest. With my warmest love,

“ Yours affectionately,

“ TOM CRESSWELL.”

After reading it, Lizzie asked to be excused for a few minutes, and went out to consult her mother. The result was a reply informing Tom that Herbert did not reach home the previous evening, and beg-

ging him to find him out, and prevail upon him to return.

Tom was astonished at the answer, and resolved to take Harry Clough into his confidence. He told Harry all that he knew about the affair, keeping back nothing, and also his surmises concerning Herbert's besetting temptation, and condition at the present time; and he solicited Harry's assistance in finding him that day, if he could be found. It was not possible for Tom to obtain another half-day's release from his duties. What he did would have to be done in the evening. But Harry was at liberty, and could make use of his time in tracing the whereabouts of the wanderer.

Tom's confidence was not misplaced. He had enlisted the sympathies of a sharp-witted friend. Harry was one of the men with eyes and ears open to everything taking place in Easingholme. He knew of Herbert Staincliffe's habits. He had watched him, heard what was said about him, and sorrowfully marked the deterioration in his character. He could have told Tom a few things that would have surprised him. After listening carefully to all Tom had to say, and weighing the circumstances in his own mind, he said,—

“I could guess where he is at twice, and guess Jericho the first time.”

“Could you, Harry?” responded Tom, a little taken aback at his confident statement.

“Yes! He's at the “Green Dragon.”

“Nay,” said Tom, “not so bad as that,” for Tom had heard of its evil reputation.

“We shall see,” Harry said, with a significant nod. “I’ll outrival St. George this afternoon. I’ll go inside the Dragon. I’ll inspect his interior belongings, and, if he’s swallowed this young fellow, well! he’ll have to disgorge, that’s all. We cannot afford to feed Dragons with stuff like Herbert Staincliffe is made of. I’ll be at your house, Tom, at half-past five this afternoon to report upon my adventure.”

Harry was there true to the time.

“Well!” said Tom, expectantly.

“Both well and ill,” said Harry. “I’ve been inside. The Dragon has him safe enough. The inside of a Dragon is not one of the brightest places; there are some queer, dim nooks in his internal arrangements; but I’ve seen him. We may have some difficulty to get him out. We *shall* get him out, however, somehow, for he’s bound to turn up at Deerhill to-night.”

“It’s a good thing to have a cheerful, confident helper like you, Harry. I think we shall manage it together.”

“Manage it, of course. He’ll not rejoice their hearts much, I’m afraid, but whatever effect he may have upon them, we must get him home, and end their fearful suspense.”

A knock came to the door. Lizzie and Belle presented themselves, with Scamp behind them, wagging his tail complacently, and looking up with his mild, brown eyes in the most good-natured way imaginable. Lizzie explained that Mrs. Staincliffe would have them come and see if Tom had heard anything more.

“Yes!” said Tom, “thanks to Harry here, we know where he is, and we’ll bring him home to-night.”

Lizzie and Belle had both spoken briefly to Harry upon entering, and now expressed their gratitude. Harry received it bashfully, and said he was willing to do all in his power to assist them. It was thanks enough to him to see Belle, although he did not say so. Belle’s face wore a troubled expression, and he would have gone to the world’s end, if that had been possible, to remove it. When they were leaving, he said,—

“What do you call the dog?”

“Not a handsome name, although we think him a handsome dog,” said Belle, smiling. “We call him Scamp.”

“Handsome is that handsome does,” replied Harry. “Here, Scamp.” The dog responded to his name, and Harry patted him on his big head, and said, “Old fellow! We should be good friends, I know.” Then turning to Lizzie and Belle, “Do you mind leaving him? Tom and I might find him useful this evening.”

“With pleasure, if he’ll stay,” said Lizzie.

“Oh, he’ll stay; won’t you, Scamp?” The dog held up his paw to shake hands with his new friend, and the two sisters went away without him.

At eight o’clock, Tom, Harry and Scamp were at the “Green Dragon,” asking to see the landlord. Impressed by Scamp’s appearance, but taking little notice of Tom and Harry, the waiter said he would find him. He did not seem easy to find. It

was a long time before he came, and when he did come—a big, fat, clean-shaven, coarse-featured man, with the looks and tones of a bully—he haughtily glanced at the three, and roughly asked what they wanted.

“We want Herbert Staincliffe,” said Harry.

“Then you won’t get him,” said the landlord.

“We shall, if he is here,” returned Harry, and he made as much of his size as he could, and spoke very determinedly.

The landlord looked down at him, as much as to say, “Who are you ?” But Harry stood erect, and seemed to mean what he said. He then looked at Tom, who maintained a quiet, but resolute demeanor. Then he examined the dog, whose eyes were antipathetically fixed on him, his lips slightly quivering, and revealing a suggestive glimmer of white teeth. After mentally measuring the three, he said,—

“Who told *you* that young Staincliffe was here ?”

“Never mind who told us,” responded Harry. “The sooner he can accompany us the better both for you and for him.”

“Oh, that’s it, is it ? my little game bantam,” said the landlord. “I can only say what I have said. You won’t get him, because he isn’t here.”

“He was here two hours ago.”

“Was. Aye. But was isn’t is. He left here quite an hour since.”

“That’s so, mayster,” said the waiter, who had been standing by, and who, upon second sight recognized Tom as somehow connected with the

Easingholme Bank. "Do you know where he went?" asked Tom.

"He said he was going home," answered the waiter. "But I watched him away, and he didn't turn up the road for home. He went across the brick-field, and then in the direction of Dene Wood."

They left the "Green Dragon" at once upon receiving this information, which, because of its straight-forwardness, they did not doubt; and it afterwards proved to be true.

"Where do you think he is?" said Tom.

"I don't know," said Harry, "unless he has gone up to Castle Dene. If he has been drinking hard, and particularly not being used to it, he may be unhinged a little; and, if he is not suffering from the extreme effects of intoxication, a sense of his shame may have driven him there instead of home. We had better try it."

They started off, Scamp still bearing them company. It had been a very sultry day. Heavy clouds had hung motionless and threatening over the district all through the afternoon. When clear of the town Tom and Harry became aware of the possible bursting of a thunder-storm. As they approached Dene Wood the peculiar stillness of the atmosphere impressed them. Nature was in hushed suspense. Not a bird twittered. Not a leaf stirred. Every blade of grass stood still beside its fellow. The only sounds, and they seemed unnaturally increased by the surrounding stillness, were the rippling of the brook,—a brook,

that never ran dry, tumbling down from the moorlands, in the hottest summer,—and the humming of the insects that gathered in myriads under the trees. As the two friends entered the wood the first large heavy drops of the thunder-shower began to fall, and, as they came faster, splashed through the thick, dry foliage, with a startling sound. Presently a vivid lightning flash leaped across the wooded valley, and the loud clap and peal of the thunder woke all the echoes in the Dene. Scamp put his tail between his legs, and came closer to his human companions. They turned up their coat collars, and pushed forward more rapidly through the gathering gloom. They did not speak to each other. They were intent upon reaching Castle Dene as soon as possible. The lightning again leaped out, and again, followed quickly each time by the reverberating peals; and the rain poured down, making the woodland path wet and slippery. But the two friends stumbled and splashed along. They came right under the ruin, and began to climb the hill. Suddenly Scamp darted before them, and, with a low whine, made for a gap in one of the old crumbling walls, closely followed by Tom and Harry.

“I believe we are right,” said Harry, breathing hard.

“I believe we are,” Tom whispered.

They passed through the gap; another flash of lightning ran across the sky, and, with remarkable distinctness, lit up their surroundings; and, while the thunder crashed over their heads, they made

their way to an object cowered in an angle of the ruin, beside which Scamp had already laid himself down. They soon found that this object was Herbert, partially intoxicated, and terrified by the storm which had broken upon him. His dazed wits had connected the storm with his own wrong doing, and his terror was increased by the sudden appearance of Scamp, followed by Tom and Harry. He soon understood who they were. His fears were appeased. He was assured that forgiveness, and a warm welcome, awaited him at Deerhill, and was persuaded to go with them ; and he arrived at home, drenched with rain, miserable with drinking, ashamed at his conduct—a poor, abject, forlorn-looking creature, and yet bringing a chastened glow of gladness to the expectant hearts of his mother and sisters.

CHAPTER XIV.

A ROBBERY.

MR. STAINCLIFFE was not less glad in his heart that his son had come home again than his wife and daughters. Since the discovery of the forged check, although it was not for a very large amount, he had been extremely anxious about Herbert, and had resolved, if he should come home, that he would not reproach or punish him for what he had done. He would give him to understand that he knew of the wrong, but also that he freely forgave it. He thought that this treatment, with the experiences he had gone through, would deter him from the committal of a similar wrong in the future.

But the gladness of his heart was not apparent in his looks or ways. He carefully hid it. Herbert was not allowed to see it. The gladness of his mother and sisters was not concealed. He saw it, and was affected by it, for a time ; but his father's demeanor toward him, to all outward appearances, was as if nothing had happened, with the single exception of one pointed reference to his misdeed, calmly made, the day after his return.

Tom Cresswell benefited by his connection with the incident. The manner in which he had borne himself when he had brought the check for Mr. Staincliffe's inspection, impressed Mr. Staincliffe favorably ; and, after Tom had gone, and he had suffi-

ciently overcome the shock of the discovery to think of any thing else, he began to feel that he had done Tom an injury, and that he ought to repair it. This conviction was strengthened when he knew of Tom's visit to Dunsford and Castle Dene. He owed Herbert's return very largely to Tom, and he saw that the revival and cultivation of friendship between Tom and Herbert would be to Herbert's advantage. Recent events had rudely awakened him to the perilous danger to which Herbert was exposed. Therefore he sent for Tom the week after Herbert came home, and apologized for the way in which he had received his proposal concerning Lizzie. He did his best to make the *amende honorable* by granting Tom permission to visit Deerhill, and expressed himself ready to sanction an engagement between them if they were still of the same mind.

Herbert suffered severely from his few days' dissipation. He left his Aunt Ellen's in the early morning ; met Winton by appointment later on, and settled with him the betting transactions of the previous day ; and remained in Dunsford drinking until the evening. Upon his arrival at Easingholme, he had made his way directly to the "Green Dragon," and there resumed his drinking. Far into the night he sat and caroused, drowning his sense of shame in fiery spirits, and laughing with the loudest of a rowdy company. Next morning he was miserable. His conscience stung him. His head was full of pain. He was sick, and loathed the sight of wholesome food. He sought forgetfulness again in the intoxicating cup. Harry Clough had seen him

drinking during the afternoon in one of the gloomy, angular rooms of the old inn, sitting over a glass of whiskey with a most dejected and woebegone air. But toward evening he brightened up, and the thought possessed him to go home. When he got outside, the fear of his misdeeds displaced the thought of home and drove him in the opposite direction; and he stumbled through the wood to Castle Dene with a confused notion in his befogged mind that he was going to hide himself and his shame.

Before Tom and Harry reached him he had become drenched with the downpour of heavy rain. While his physical constitution was strong and recuperative, it was not inured to the absorption of intoxicants. The few days' drinking had made him unusually liable to suffer from exposure. The day after his arrival home he began to shiver with cold as if he were threatened with an ague, supervened before evening by a burning heat, and a thirst well-nigh intolerable. The next day he was in a high fever, which eventually reduced him to unconsciousness, and, as it ran its course brought him near to the gates of death. His mind wandered among imaginative spectres. His muttered words were disclosures of his recent evil life. Slowly he came back to himself, and discovered how narrowly he had escaped the fatal termination. His mother nursed him with affectionate devotion. His sisters did their utmost to brighten his returning life. His father secretly rejoiced at his recovery. He was glad to observe the signs of increasing strength. But he did not manifest any special solicitude beyond the occasion-

al expression of a hope that Herbert would soon be at his accustomed place in the office.

When Herbert did recover, and began again to attend to business, he studiously avoided Dempster, and shunned the "Green Dragon" and its company. It really seemed, for several months, as if the lesson had been severe enough to practically affect his life. He resolved in his own mind that he would keep both from gambling and drinking, devote himself thoroughly to business, and redeem the evil day which had lately overtaken him. If the resolve had not been made in his own strength he might have kept it. But Herbert had not learned the secret, so well known by Tom Cresswell, that all prevailing strength is from God. Dempster marked the difference in Herbert's treatment of him, and determined to win him again to an evil career. Although Herbert never spoke to him, except he was really obliged, and then only in the way of business, yet, being in the same office, Dempster had the opportunity of pushing himself upon Herbert's notice, and, by blandishments which he well knew the art of, gradually breaking down the opposition of Herbert's mind. In six months' time, so patiently persistent and successful had Dempster been, Herbert was once more in his hands.

Dempster himself had not continued in his evil course without becoming harder in heart, and more unscrupulous in his thoughts and ways. The companionships he formed were of an increasingly lower order. Quance introduced him to a round-featured, bullet-headed, closely-cropped young fel-

low, whose latest *alias* was Granton, professedly hailing from London, but really an itinerant non-descript, wanted in more than one place by the officers of the law. Granton and Quance worked upon the cupidity of Dempster, and fired his heart with hopes of gain, intending themselves, however, simply to use him as a cat's-paw for coming at their own ends, before clearing out of the neighborhood; and the three, between them, laid a plot for the robbery of Deerhill, in which Herbert, through Dempster's intrigue, was to play an important part. The plot was ripe for execution, and Dempster, waiting his chance, quietly said to Herbert,—

“We haven't seen you at the ‘Dragon’ lately?”

“No!” Herbert replied. “The ‘Dragon’ is nothing in my way.”

“We shall have good company there to-night. We are to have a game or two, and then a few songs from a fellow called Granton—a fine young chap from London.”

Herbert made no reply.

“We should be glad to see you,” continued Dempster. “All the fellows would give you a right hearty welcome back again, and they are a picked lot to-night. It is an invitation night to the little corner room. Will you come?”

Herbert hesitated. The temptation was strong, but he thought of home, and Kate Fairfax, and Tom Cresswell, and his own altered life, and his feeling was to say “No!” Then he thought of the picked company, and the chance of winning a trifle, and the excitement of an evening like he had

enjoyed before-time, and the harmlessness of going once more, just once, and his feeling was to say "Yes!" Dempster observed the hesitation and said,—

"We shall have a jolly time. I'll go shares with you in the cards,—you know my luck,—and then we can settle down to a quiet glass, and listen to Granton's piping. He has a capital voice. Will you come?"

"I'll see," said Herbert. "If I come, I'll be there at seven."

Dempster was sure of his presence. He came. The cards were produced, and he won again and again, and with his winnings became excited. Dempster led him on, plied him with liquor, got him into a reckless mood, cleverly manipulated the cards by the help of Quance and Granton, who played to lose, that they might play a deeper game to win until Herbert was flushed with extraordinary success,—a run of luck such as he had not experienced before. The cards were put away, Herbert reluctantly consenting; and, under the increased excitement of uproarious song, Herbert drank still deeper, and by eleven o'clock was intoxicated almost to helplessness. Dempster had taken very little, Granton and Quance less still, and, when eleven o'clock came, proposed to Herbert that they should go with him part of the way home. Herbert unsuspectingly consented, glad to have company through the dark lanes to Deerhill.

When they entered the gates, and walked up the drive, it was nearly twelve o'clock. As they ap-

proached the house, Scamp, who was lying just within the kitchen door, roused himself, and began barking.

“ I didn’t know they had a brute of a dog ; ” whispered Granton, surlily. “ Why didn’t you say, so, Dempster ? ”

“ I forgot to mention that,” Dempster replied.

“ If he comes out when the door is opened he must not go in again,” said Granton, “ or else we’re done for. We might as well give it up.”

“ They may open the door when we get a little nearer,” said Quance, “ and if we stick to Herbert till the dog comes up, we can manage him. I thought about the dog if you didn’t ; and I’ll warrant he never barks again, if he comes within the smell of my hand.”

This conversation was conducted in an undertone so that Herbert should not hear.

Quance was right. Mrs. Staincliffe was waiting for Herbert, in nervous dread lest he should come home intoxicated ; and, when Scamp began barking, she opened the kitchen door. Scamp bounded down the drive toward his master. Mrs. Staincliffe thought she heard the sound of voices and footsteps in the darkness. The three were wishing Herbert “ Good night ! ” and as he stumbled toward the open door, they secreted themselves in the shrubbery. Mrs. Staincliffe listened intently, and a low moan came through the darkness, a moan of pain, as if Scamp were sorrowfully greeting his master ; and when Herbert entered she expected Scamp to follow. But he was not to be

seen. She held the door a moment or two, and called him, and when he did not come, closed it, and followed Herbert into the dining room.

“ Oh, Herbert ; I’m sorry—very, very sorry. I hoped you had quite overcome the temptation,” and the tears fell from his mother’s eyes upon his hand.

“ Don’t fret, mother ; I’ll—I’ll—I’ll t—ry to be better. I—I’m a poor, weak mortal. I—I didn’t mean to grieve you again, mother,” he said, with a thick hiccoughing utterance and a lolling of the head, that altogether neutralized the worth and meaning of his words.

“ Did anyone come home with you ? ”

“ Eh ? ” he asked, pretending not to hear, but really unwilling to confess that he had had company home.

“ Did anyone come home with you ? I thought I heard someone in the drive before you came to the door.”

“ D—id you ? Well—I’m not so bad but what I can manage to walk home alone. I—I think I’ll go to bed, mother,” and he reeled away to the foot of the stairs.

She helped him to his room ; then she returned to the kitchen door, opened it, and looked out again for Scamp. The night was so dark that she could not see beyond the grassy margin of the yard. She thought he might be in the yard, or near it, and she called him twice, but there was no answer. Closing the door again, she sought solace for her sorrow in the forgetfulness of sleep.

Early next morning, the family at Deerhill were roused by the gardener. He had discovered Scamp dead upon the lawn. He had noticed footprints in the soft earth of the shrubbery. The grass near the folding windows of the drawing-room was very much trampled. He suspected that the house had been entered in the night, and his suspicions were verified by the family when they came downstairs. The ground-floor rooms had been ransacked, and the drawers broken open and emptied. The silver spoons and cutlery, Isabel's gold watch, which had been left upon the drawing-room mantelpiece; a cash-box, with twenty-three pounds in it, which had been locked in one of the dining-room drawers; a set of silk embroidered antimacassars, presented to Mrs. Staincliffe by her sister Ellen; Lizzie's sealskin jacket; the servant's silver brooch and earrings from the sideboard in the kitchen; all kinds of small portable goods, of any value whatsoever, had been gathered together and taken away. But the loss of these, for the time, was overshadowed by the loss of Scamp, for the poor dog lay stiff and swollen, having been poisoned before the robbery began. The hearts of all were filled with pity at the sight of him, and Lizzie and Isabel could hardly refrain from tears.

Juno was saddled at once, and the groom galloped into Easingholme to inform the police of the incident. An hour later a sergeant was at Deerhill, and by his questioning, quickly ascertained who was the last home the night before. Mrs. Staincliffe told him what she had observed when letting

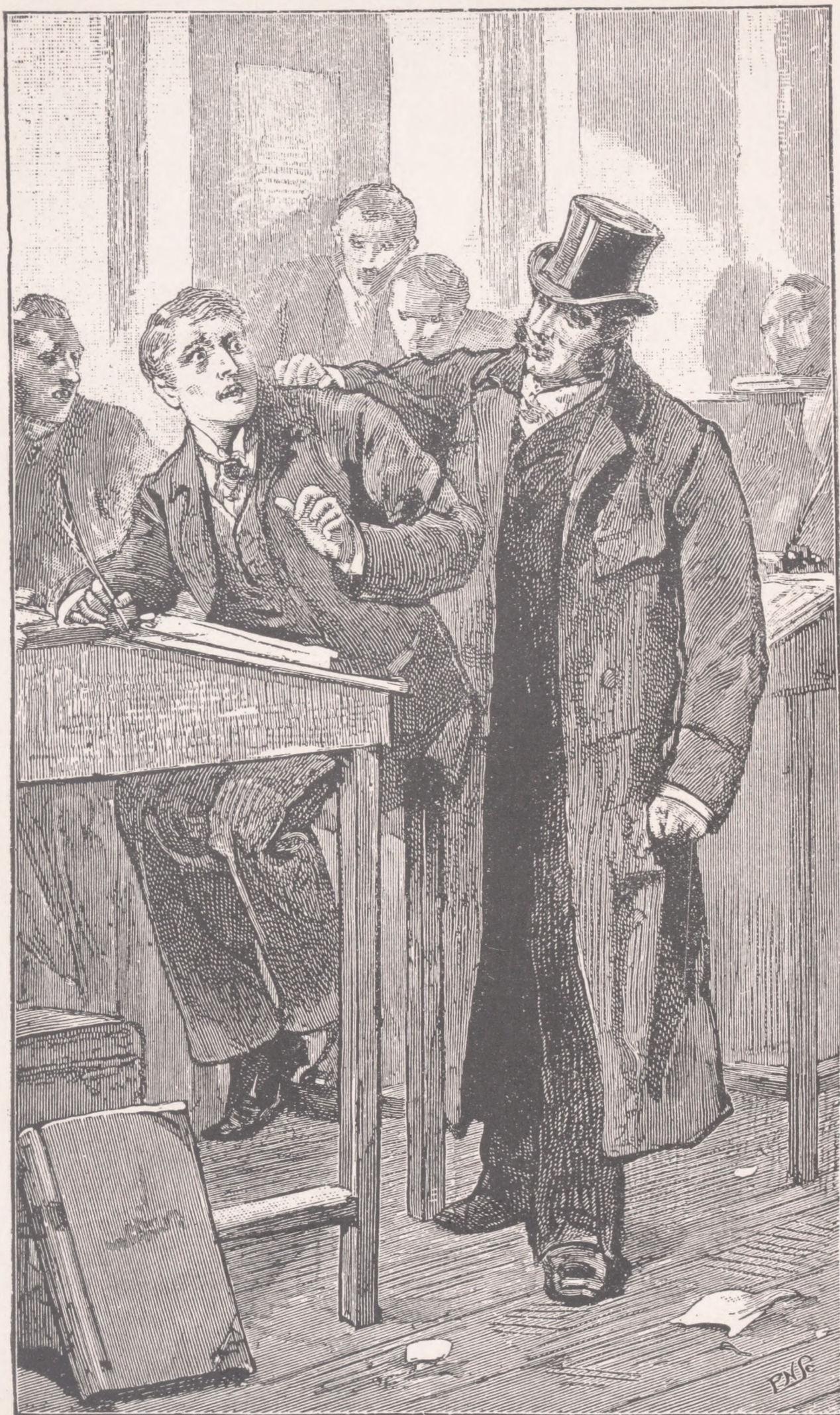
Herbert in, and Herbert and the sergeant were closeted for some time in private interview. Herbert came from the library with a pale and downcast look, and the sergeant, regarding the whole matter from a purely business standpoint, wished the troubled family a cheerful "Good-morning."

"You have had no hand in this, I hope, Herbert?" said Mr. Staincliffe, with severely-knitted brows, and an expression of pain upon his countenance.

"No! father. I knew nothing of it until this morning," and Herbert blushed at the thought of his father suspecting him. He looked his father full in the face, however, and his eyes were so steady that his father's suspicions were at once removed.

"Have you any idea who has done it, Herbert?" he asked.

"It may have been done by some young fellows who walked home with me last night," responded Herbert, the blush deepening at the confession that he had come home in questionable company; while the father's brows again knitted, and the look of pain crept back into his face. "The sergeant will find out if it is so. We shall see," and Herbert turned away, leaving his father in silence.



THE ARREST.—See page 157.

CHAPTER XV.

DETECTED.

AT half-past ten, while the clerks were quietly working in Mr. Staincliffe's office, and Mr. Staincliffe himself was busily engaged with his morning correspondence, a stout man, brown-whiskered and sharp-eyed, dressed in a plain suit of grey tweed, walked in without announcement, and glanced keenly round the room. Approaching Dempster, he tapped him quietly on the shoulder, and said,—

“Young man! you're wanted.”

“By whom?” asked Dempster, with a start.

“By me,” responded the detective, “an officer of the law. I must ask you to go with me to the police-station.”

“What for?” asked Dempster, turning very pale, and with a visible tremor.

“For being concerned in a robbery last night at Deerhill.”

The clerks turned round in astonishment when the detective entered and arrested Dempster. Their astonishment increased at the conversation, which, although quiet, could be heard distinctly all over the office. The room was so still, that, for a moment or two, the clerks could hear Dempster's hard breathing, and the tick of the clock. The only person in the office not looking on and apparently not

astonished, was Herbert. He remained behind the partition, and seemed absorbed in his work, but he heard everything, and was painfully conscious of the whole scene.

Mr. Staincliffe, becoming aware that something unusual was happening in the office, came out of his private room, and looked inquiringly from the detective to Dempster, and then at the wondering faces of his men.

“Good-morning, Mr. Staincliffe,” said the detective.

“Good-morning,” said Mr. Staincliffe. “What is the matter?”

“I have called for this young man here,” pointing to Dempster. “I hope his absence will not inconvenience you. He is wanted for a case of house-breaking last night.”

Mr. Staincliffe started. He looked hard at Dempster, and then glanced at Herbert’s bent head and busy fingers behind the partition. He took in the situation, and said,—

“I’m very sorry. Are you sure you have the right man?”

“Quite.”

“Then there is nothing more to be said,” and Mr. Staincliffe was turning again towards his private apartment.

“Am I the only one?” asked Dempster, and Mr. Staincliffe stood still to hear the reply.

“We’ll see about that a little later,” answered the detective. “You’ll come with me, please, and quietly I hope. I don’t want a row,” and he

pushed his coat aside, as if accidentally, and disclosed the bright rim of a pair of steel handcuffs protruding from his hip pocket. "You may walk beside me to the station." Then, turning to Mr. Staincliffe, "I will be back again, sir, in the course of an hour. I should like a little conversation with you, and we may need your help in this business."

The two went away. Mr. Staincliffe returned to his room, and a murmured conversation about the affair was indulged in by the clerks in the office. Presently Herbert was called into his father's apartment, and the father said,—

"I am much troubled, and very anxious, Herbert, about this matter. It is looking very dark, and, to me, has taken quite an unexpected turn. Did you expect Dempster would be arrested this morning?"

"Yes!"

"Then he came home with you last night?"

"Yes!"

"Is anyone else implicated in the robbery?"

"I fear so."

"You are clear, Herbert?" and the tones were a searching appeal.

"I am clear," Herbert replied. "I had no suspicion of robbery when they accompanied me home last night, and knew nothing about it until the alarm was made this morning. I was as much surprised as anyone else. They must have used me as a blind for getting near the house, and giving Scamp the poison, but I was not aware of it at the time. My blame lies in being in their company, and giving

them a chance they would not otherwise have had," and Herbert hung his head in shame.

"Who are the others?" asked the father.

"Two fellows from London that Dempster introduced me to—Quance and Granton. You won't know them. I don't know them myself very well."

"I am deeply thankful you are clear, but I hope it will be a severe and lasting lesson to you. You have been going wrong again for a while. Try to mend," and yet, as he said these words, Mr. Staincliffe was not quite easy in his own conscience. Eighteen months before he might have given such advice without that slight feeling of reserve, that tinge of compunction of which he was now conscious. Among his papers this morning were communications from a firm of speculative sharebrokers, who, on account of their method of conducting business, were tabooed by their fellows; and, previous to the entrance of the detective, he had been considering an offer for the employment of money which he did not possess in his own right. He held it in trust for others—children who had been orphaned, and provided for by will, and whose money he could not honestly use in risky and doubtful speculations. He was being gradually drawn into the contracting and increasingly forceful circles of a whirlpool. He was not altogether aware of it, and yet sufficiently aware to feel that his advice to Herbert needed to be attended to by himself as well.

The detective returned, and informed Mr. Staincliffe that he should require his company to Duns-

ford. He had visited the "Green Dragon," where he expected to secure the other two thieves, but the landlord vouched that he had not seen them since the evening before. He would not take the voucher of the landlord, and carefully searched the premises. Still he failed to find them. And the word of the landlord was confirmed by inquiry at the railway station—two men, answering to the description given, had left by the two forty-five night train—and also by a telegram from Dunsford informing the authorities in Easingholme that a quantity of stolen goods had been found there, and that two men, that very morning had been arrested while depositing other goods in the same place. Notwithstanding this, with a detective's precaution, he had made arrangements to have the "Green Dragon" watched, because the discovery and arrest at Dunsford might prove to be connected with another case.

Mr. Staincliffe and the detective were met in Dunsford by a police officer. They proceeded to the little chapel on the bridge—a tiny place, like a miniature Gothic minster, with the statuary decaying in the niches, and the oaken door grey and cracked with age—a chapel built to commemorate a battle on the bridge during the Wars of the Roses—and now, alas! degenerated into a temporary storehouse for stolen goods. The attention of the police had been directed to this sanctuary by a barge woman, who, during the night, some weeks before, had observed a man climb the pillar immediately beneath it, swing himself over the wall, and disappear

through the window. Upon examination the chapel was found to contain several missing articles from houses in Dunsford and neighboring towns, and also a set of burglar's tools. They were left undisturbed. The chapel was placed under the strictest surveillance. And, on the morning of the robbery of Deerhill, in the dense darkness preceding the breaking of the dawn, two men were observed to enter the chapel, climbing to the window from a boat on the river, and, while depositing their spoil, were surprised, and after a short struggle, were captured. These men were Quance and Granton.

A crowd was gathered upon the bridge when Mr. Staincliffe arrived. It had been a large crowd, for when the people of Dunsford heard of the capture, they came together in great numbers to gratify their curiosity and manifest their indignation. As the day advanced, and the interest lessened, the people drifted away to their various employments. Very many, however, of the idler sort, whose employments were never pressing, still remained, and through these the police officer pushed his way, followed by Mr. Staincliffe and the detective. He opened the old oaken door, and asked the two to step inside. The people came together, treading on each other's heels, and peering over each other's heads, to obtain a momentary view of the articles within. But the policeman quickly shut the door, and Mr. Staincliffe proceeded at once to examine the goods that were laid before him. The silver was there, marked with the monogram of himself and wife; Belle's watch was there, and Lizzie's

jacket, and the antimacassars, and the servant's brooch and earrings, and many smaller things. The only article missing was the cash-box and its contents. There were many things he could not recognize mixed among those from Deerhill, and which the officer said were from other places in and about Dunsford. The two captured men had evidently been working the district, and would soon have been away beyond the reach of detection, with the booty they had gathered together.

"Do you know these men, sir?" asked the policeman.

"Not at all."

"Would you like to see them?"

"No, thank you. I suppose I shall be wanted at the trial, and it will be time enough then."

"The third man arrested at Easingholme, was in your employ, I understand."

"Yes!"

"How do you account for his companionship with these two? They are evidently old hands at the business."

"I can only account for it by the fact that he has been addicted to gambling for some time, and, I fear, drinking, too. He must have met them at——what place do you call it?" turning to the detective.

"The 'Green Dragon.'"

"Yes! the 'Green Dragon.' I really cannot account for it in any other way."

The magistrates committed the three to take their trial at the Assizes. When the trial came off,

Quance and Granton were undefended, and there were old charges against them under other names which aggravated their offense, and brought upon them a very heavy sentence of imprisonment. Dempster was defended by a local barrister. Instructed by Dempster he tried to establish one of two things,—either that Herbert, the chief witness against the three, was as much an accomplice in the committal of the crime as Dempster ; or that Dempster, like Herbert, was simply a tool in the hands of the two men, who were known to be professional burglars. He submitted Herbert to a tortuous, severe, and galling cross-examination. He dwelt particularly upon Herbert's intimate friendship with Dempster. He made capital out of Herbert's refusal to inform his mother that he had had company home. He remarked that Herbert never troubled himself about the absence of the dog, but went to bed and left the dog outside. He implied that Herbert might have come down in the night, when the household was settled, and admitted the other three. He did not succeed, however, in his task ; and feeling it to be a foregone conclusion that Dempster would not be acquitted, he used his utmost endeavor to lighten the sentence by setting forth his former good character, and specially pleading that this was a first offense. The jury found him guilty, with a recommendation that his punishment should be lenient, and the judge committed him to prison for twelve months.

Herbert's appearance and examination in the witness-box drew public attention to his misdeeds.

There were many who refused to believe that he had nothing to do with the crime. Their sympathies were with Dempster, simply because he had to suffer. The majority of people are not very discriminating, and do not carefully follow out to their legitimate conclusions the details of a public trial. They feel for those who are punished, and visit their indignation upon those who seem to be implicated, and yet escape. The judge thought well to address a few words to Herbert, in a serious and severe tone, about his habits, and the associations into which his habits had drawn him ; and he reminded him that he had only escaped the fate of the others by the skin of his teeth. Herbert was disgraced in his own eyes, and in the eyes of the people of Easingholme, and he went out of the court a sadder, if not a wiser, man.

CHAPTER XVI.

REFORMATION.

THE robbery and trial, and the various incidents connected therewith, had a most marked effect upon Herbert's behavior. He felt keenly the words addressed to him by the judge. He saw the necessity of altering his course of life. The people of Easingholme did not soon forget the trial. Herbert had many evidences that he had gone down in the estimation of the people, and that if the name of Staincliffe was not permanently to suffer by his recent conduct, he would have to be very careful about his mode of life in the future.

With the removal of Dempster from the office, one fruitful source of temptation was taken out of his way. Dempster was a cunning man, patient in his cunning, and of varied resources when determined upon the attainment of an object; he was also inveterately selfish, always intent upon his own advantage. The easy nature of Herbert, yielding to importunity, lacking in clear apprehension of what was right, and in courage to do the right when apprehended, was no match for Dempster; and it was entirely favorable to Herbert's reformation that Dempster was no longer near by to exercise his influence over him.

Herbert kept away from the "Green Dragon." The frequenters of that shady house held him in

contempt because of his damaging evidence at the trial. They thought that he should have covered his comrades if at all possible, and, particularly, that he should have kept back evidence against Dempster, and tried, by reserve or prevarication, to secure Dempster's acquittal. Herbert cared very little what they thought about him, or how they felt towards him. Recent events had revealed, more clearly than he had ever seen it before, the deep line that divided the society of the "Green Dragon" from the society in which he was naturally expected to move; and he resolved that he would be truer to his training, to the influences of his home life, and the respectability of his family, than he had been hitherto.

Weeks and months went by, and the resolve, to all outward appearance, was faithfully kept. He attended carefully to business, to the great satisfaction of his father, in whom hopes rose again that Herbert would carry forward the success of the firm, and make the Staincliffe name still more honorable. He spent most of his evenings at home. His mother and sisters gladly welcomed him, and home began to assume its old, cheerful aspect. Mrs. Staincliffe's happiness would have been almost perfect but for a feeling of uneasiness in regard to her husband, who absented himself from home much more frequently than he was wont to do, and exhibited alternations of feeling, a moodiness quite unusual for him, which puzzled and troubled his wife a good deal. Herbert was altered, however, and over that change she rejoiced. He even interested

himself in social movements connected with Brindley Church. Without showing any definite religious inclinations, he was ready at all festive gatherings to make himself agreeable and useful; and his mother fain hoped that this was only a steppingstone to higher and more important work.

There was one dead fly in this sweetly smelling ointment of an altered life. It was not seen by everyone. Herbert knew that the dead fly was there, and to himself the savor of his life was spoiled thereby. Gambling had obtained a firm grip upon his nature. He indulged the habit, not to any considerable extent, and not in the low way practiced at the "Green Dragon," but mostly by bets upon sports of various kinds with persons nearer his own station in life. The continuation of the habit was partly owing to its prevalence at the works. He saw the workpeople settling their accounts every pay-day. So common had the practice become that the young people at the works, mere children some of them, fourteen years old, would regularly take their few coppers to a certain part of the premises, and have them entered upon this or that horse, in the hope of obtaining large returns. If Robert Cresswell had been at his old post, such things would not have been tolerated, but now there was no one to check them. Foremen, as well as ordinary workpeople, were addicted to the habit, and Mr. Staincliffe himself did not care to interfere. The sight of this continuous and regular gambling whetted Herbert's desire, and, while the remembrance of past events exer-

cised to some extent a salutary influence upon him, he ventured to stake his money upon sports that were constantly taking place in and around Easingholme.

One bright Saturday morning, in the summer following the robbery, Tom Cresswell received a note from Lizzie asking him to spend the afternoon and evening at Deerhill. Mrs. Fairfax and Kate were over for a few days. They intended having tea on the lawn, and a ramble afterwards in the woods behind the house. Tom had frequently visited Deerhill for some time. His engagement with Lizzie was recognized by the whole family, and he was welcomed cheerfully by them all, not excepting Mr. Staincliffe himself. He presented himself just as tea was being served under the shade of an expansive willow ; and Belle, who was seated beside her sister, rose with a playful expression, to give him his rightful place. It was a very homely party. They were all in a merry mood. It was a lovely afternoon. Everything was bathed in sunshine, and the sunshine seemed also to have entered into their hearts.

After tea they started for the woods. Kate and Herbert led the way ; Tom and Lizzie followed ; Belle tripped between them and the three elder ones who brought up the rear, tormenting both, and deriving fun out of everything.

“ Herbert seems to have quite got over his temptation, Tom,” said Lizzie.

“ He is certainly very much better,” Tom replied.

“ We are all so glad. Home is very different

now that he is steady and spends more of his time with us. We have all great hopes of him, and before long father intends taking him into the business, and giving him a share in the concern."

"It will be a joy to me if your hopes are realized," said Tom. "Herbert has capital business talent, and, if he will only keep right, there is no reason why he should not become a very successful man."

Tom was guarded in what he said. He had his fears about Herbert, because he knew that he had not altogether broken away from his gambling habits, and he knew also that Mr. Staincliffe was not so sound commercially as he had been in past years. The rumors about Mr. Staincliffe's speculations were unpleasant to listen to, and often made Tom anxious, but he did not disturb Lizzie by telling her all he knew.

"Herbert shows a great partiality for Kate's society," said Lizzie.

"Yes!" said Tom. "Do you think them suited for each other?"

"They might be very comfortable together," answered Lizzie, "and if Herbert were to propose to her, and she accepted him, the engagement might be another link binding Herbert to better ways."

"How would the engagement be received by Mr. and Mrs. Staincliffe?"

"It would be very gratifying to them. I heard them speaking about it the other day, and father said he desired nothing better, and would be

pleased if it were speedily effected. There is no doubt about Herbert's affection for Kate, if the affection were likely to be returned."

"I think that Kate would accept him, but I am not sure about her affection for him." Lizzie looked concernedly into Tom's face, and Tom replied to the look by saying, "I may be mistaken. She may love him, but Kate is difficult to understand."

"But, surely, she would not accept him if she didn't love him ; would she, Tom?"

"Perhaps she would accept him in the hope of loving him, if she felt quite certain about his affection for her."

Lizzie was silent for awhile, and when she spoke again the conversation took another turn.

Herbert and Kate had gone rapidly forward leaving the others far behind. They had joked and laughed together, not thinking either about time or company, until Herbert suddenly halted, and said,—

"Why, Kate, we must be a long way ahead. I cannot hear them at all."

There was almost perfect stillness. No sound of voices or footsteps reached them. The wind was quiet, the leaves hardly moved. The birds were indulging in a siesta during the warmth of the late afternoon. The sky was cloudless, and from the blue expanse, the sunshine poured down and flooded everything with glorious light.

"Let us sit down, and wait for them," said Herbert.

Kate obediently seated herself on a grassy mound, half surrounded by tall fern, and shaded by a group

of young trees. Herbert sat beside her. For some time no word passed between them. Herbert seemed lost in thought, while Kate stripped the *pinnæ* from the fern and twisted the bared stalks around her fingers. All at once Herbert stayed her hand, and kept it within his own.

“Kate,” said he, “I have been wanting to tell you how much I love you, and I do not see why I should not tell you now. Ever since I came to your house after the accident, I have loved you, and cherished the thought that one day you would be mine.”

Kate made no reply, beyond that given by a deeper color spreading over her face, and not attempting to withdraw her hand. Encouraged by these signs Herbert continued,—

“May I claim you, Kate? Can you return my affection?”

“I could not love a man,” responded Kate, and speaking under controlled emotion, “who forgets himself so much as to dishonor his family name, and who cares so little for himself as to injure his prospects in life by expensive and evil ways.”

“*Kate!*” and Herbert spoke loudly, and almost fiercely. Then, subsiding, and penitent, he said, “I know I am not worthy of you. I have made a fool of myself. The name of Staincliffe has been dishonored by me. Your charge is just. But are two years of a man’s life to condemn him forever? Kate! I’m a better man now, and will be a better man, and, if you will be mine, you shall never have cause to reproach me or to reproach yourself for accepting me. Look at me now. I do not look like

I did last year at Dunsford races, and you shall never see me look like that again."

Kate turned her face toward him. There was sympathy in her looks—a tenderness that Herbert had not seen before ; and he bent toward her, and kissed her.

" You will not refuse me, Kate? Give me a kiss, and let that be your answer," and Kate drew him toward her, and kissed him twice, and made him happier than ever he had been before.

When the others came up, they had risen from the mound and were waiting to receive them. During the evening it was noticed that they were both quieter than usual, but there was a joy in their countenances not difficult to interpret.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RIVIERA.

“GOOD morning!” said the Rev. Nicholas Tremayne, as he entered Robert Cresswell’s house for the purpose of consulting him about an important circuit matter. How are you this morning?”

“Very well, sir. How are you?”

“Capital,” he replied. “A fine morning like this puts new life into a man. It is a foretaste of spring,” and, as he stood at the door in the sunshine, he raised himself to his full height and took a deep breath as if he enjoyed it.

It was the twenty-fifth day of March, the commencement of the spring quarter. The winter had been a severe one,—very few bright, frosty days, but plenty of rain and snow, and a darkened atmosphere. A clear, fine sunny morning was very welcome.

After finishing his circuit business, Mr. Tremayne said,—“I suppose there is a wedding to-day at Deerhill.”

“Yes!” replied Mrs. Cresswell. “I am very glad the day is fine.”

“Do you know the bride?”

“No! that is, not personally. She is a step-daughter to Mrs. Fairfax, of Dunsford, Mrs. Staincliffe’s sister. She is a beautiful girl, and not with-

out money. I understand that Mr. and Mrs. Staincliffe are both very well pleased with the match."

"I hope the marriage will prove a happy one, and that it will keep young Staincliffe steadier, and help him to settle down to a useful life. He has been much better lately, has he not Mr. Cresswell?"

"He has, much better, but I fear he has not shaken himself free from a perilous habit which may ruin him if he is not careful."

"Indeed. What is that?"

"Gambling."

"Oh! yes. And by-the-by, have you heard any rumors lately about Mr. Staincliffe? A gentleman was telling me the other day that he did not stand so well commercially as he had done,—that the reputation of the firm was suffering through a suspicion that Mr. Staincliffe speculated a good deal and had lately lost money. Is it true, think you?"

"I am afraid so. You know, Mr. Tremayne, I am interested in the firm because of my long service under Mr. Staincliffe and his father. I have had to do with the building up of the business, and one of the greatest troubles of my life was to leave it; and whatever affects it now I am as much concerned about as if I were still in the employ of Mr. Staincliffe. Tom told me that Mr. Staincliffe had taken Herbert into partnership with him in prospect of his marriage, and had given him a substantial share in the business; and, if it had not been for Herbert's besetting temptation, I should have hoped that this

arrangement would have been the salvation of the business. I hope so still, notwithstanding the temptation, but should be much more sanguine if Herbert would free himself from it."

"It is a great pity that Mr. Staincliffe parted with you, Mr. Cresswell. I wish he would take you back again."

"I knew his father, sir, and loved him ; and I loved Mr. Staincliffe for his father's sake. There is nothing I would not now do for him. It grieved me when he parted with me so easily, and it has grieved me still more to see the course he has taken since I left. I desire nothing better than to serve him, if he would allow me to serve him, not with eye service as a man pleaser, but as a servant of Christ."

"He may find out your worth some day," said the minister. "I hope he will not find it out too late."

It was a happy day at Deerhill. The wedding was celebrated at Brindley Church. The works were closed, and the workpeople were treated to a day's enjoyment at the sea-side. Many guests were invited to Deerhill. The wedding presents were numerous and costly, the congratulations were warm-hearted and sincere. Herbert was proud of his bride, and with very good reason, for her beauty was enhanced by the excitement of the occasion, and the charming attire in which, with perfect taste, loving hands had decked her. She did her utmost to please, and Herbert heartily seconded her efforts, so that when, after a merry afternoon,

the time came for them to leave, they whirled down the drive, followed by showers of rice, half-a-dozen old slippers, and a cheerful chorus of good wishes from the whole company.

Kate had expressed a wish to spend the honeymoon in the Riviera. It was too early in the year to expect fine weather in England and she thought they ought to seek fine weather in the sunny South. She had read and heard so much about the lovely scenery and the salubrious climate of the Riviera that she longed to go. Herbert needed no persuading. Aunt Ellen, and Mr. and Mrs. Staincliffe were quite agreeable. The bride's wish in regard to the wedding arrangements was supreme. And away they went, light-hearted with pleasant anticipation and rejoicing in their new found happiness, first to London and then forward to Mentone.

They found delightful weather on the shores of the Mediterranean. Letters came back, written mostly by Kate, full of glowing descriptions of Mentone, and Cannes, and Nice, and San Remo, and Monaco—letters pervaded by happy feeling, which rejoiced the hearts of the readers at home. They began to feel that the marriage was an auspicious event in their family life, and that Herbert had thoroughly reformed, and was not likely to lapse again into his old ways. There was only one sad heart at Deerhill—the heart of Mr. Staincliffe. The sadness was not owing to Herbert's marriage, but to another, and, as he thought, secret cause; but it was a sadness which the joy of Herbert's marriage could not overcome.

“ We heard from Kate again this morning,” said Lizzie, a fortnight after the wedding.

“ And how are they ? ” asked Tom, “ Still the same ? ”

“ As happy as they can be,” she replied. “ It must be a lovely place, Tom.”

“ I believe it is—charming ! ”

“ They seemed to have visited all the towns already, and like them all, though some of them, of course, better than others. There is one place—what did she call it ?—Bordighera—a very quiet place, where the palms are beautiful ; but they seem to have a preference for the busier towns, and like both Nice and Monaco.”

“ Kate is fond of life The busier towns will suit her. But Monaco is rather a dangerous quarter for Herbert. However, I think he’ll be safe enough with Kate.”

Lizzie’s attention was mentally diverted, and she hardly heard Tom’s words. Unintentionally turning the conversation, she said,—

“ You remember my fern cabinet, Tom ? Harry Clough was admiring it on the day of the wedding, and made a remark about it to Belle which she could not understand. He said that you, Tom—that *you* must be a very handy workman to make so neat a cabinet as that. Belle told him that you had not made it, but that Herbert had bought it, and given it to me as a birthday present. Harry, however, assured her that you had made it, because he had seen you working at it himself in your own house. Did you make it, really ? ”

“Why, Lizzie! what does it matter who made it, so long as Herbert presented it?”

“But did you, Tom?”

“Well! and what if I did?”

“I should prize it all the more, for one thing,” said Lizzie, with a blush. “But if you made it, how did Herbert get hold of it? Did he buy it from you.”

“No, Lizzie. I wouldn’t have sold it to anyone.”

“Then did you give it to Herbert that he might give it to me?”

“Something like that.”

“But he gave it to me as if it were his own—as if he had purchased it for me?”

“It was his own when I gave it to him.”

“There is something about it I cannot understand,” said Lizzie, with a puzzled air. Explain Tom, please.

“You see, Lizzie,” said Tom, “Herbert was hard up. He had been tempted to make a foolish bet with Dick Pashley, and, as a consequence, his money was transferred to Dick Pashley’s pocket. He wanted to buy something for you, but he had nothing to buy with, and so I made him take the cabinet that he might give it to you, and thereby save both you and him from disappointment. He was your brother, Lizzie, and I was nobody, and what did it matter so long as you got the cabinet? It was made for you, and perhaps it was better for you to receive it from somebody than nobody.”

Lizzie’s face grew sad, and yet there was joy beaming through the sadness; her eyes were dim with tears, and yet her lips were smiling; and she turned toward Tom, and kissed him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FIRE !

THE cry of "Fire !" rang through the streets of Easingholme one Friday evening in April,— "Fire !" frantically repeated by a man as he dashed along towards the fire-engine station, and, in his excitement, smashed the pane of glass with his fist in order to get at the key. Unheeding his bleeding knuckles, he still shouted "Fire !" and unlocked the station door, and began himself to pull out the engine. Many people heard him who did not see him, for it was dark, nearly nine o'clock, and they caught up the cry, and echoed it from street to street, "Fire !" The steam buzz of a mill began to blow in order to indicate in which direction the fire was, and to spread the alarm wider ; and crowds began to gather, and run, some toward the place where the buzz was blowing, and some toward the fire-engine station. "Where is it ?" asked one and another ; but for some time no one seemed to know ; then it spread with amazing rapidity, "Staincliffe's" and the horses, maddened by the shouting of the people, and the lash of the whip, plunged along the streets, and were pulled up, quivering and wet, in front of the burning works.

The fire had obtained a firm hold of the building before it was discovered. By the time the hose pipes were attached to the hydrants, and the

streams of water began to play upon the flames, which had broken out in the basement, and were surging toward the roof, puffs of smoke issued from cracks and crevices, and running bands of fire were seen where the woodwork had already ignited. The contents of the structure were of a highly inflammable kind. As the wooden barrels and cases, in which the various prepared sugars were packed, began to burn, and the sugars themselves to melt and blaze, the fire became fiercer and the heat more intense. The firemen saw that their efforts to save the building were useless. Soon the whole roof was one sheet of bright flame, and, in a few minutes, fell in with a crash, breaking through the partially-consumed floors, and sending showers of sparks flying upward to the sky. The inside of the building was now converted into a furnace, the tongues of fire leaping over and consuming the tumbled *debris* with hiss, and crackle, and roar, as if they were animated spirits delighting in their work of destruction. The firemen kept steadily at their work, pouring water upon the walls, and through the windows into the burning mass, and keeping their eyes open lest the fire should spread to the surrounding premises.

An immense crowd of people had assembled, and gathered about the building on every side. The lurid light fell upon their upturned faces. Nearly all were lost in contemplation of the spectacle. Very few thought about the Staincliffes, not because they did not sympathize with them—their sympathies would have been abundant if they had

had time to think. They were simply intent upon watching the scene. And, as they looked up, pointing out to each other the progress of the flames, scarcely forbearing a shout when the roof fell in, the peculiarities of their faces, the lines that stamped each face with an individuality of its own, were revealed by the red glare with an almost ludicrous distinctness. Their faces were seen in an unwonted aspect, an aspect tending to caricature, and only their faces, for the crowds were so dense, and the night was so dark that all underneath was dusky shadow.

The office was attached to the main building, and burst into flames during the early progress of the fire. Two firemen were told off to play upon the office from an adjoining shed. After several ineffectual attempts to get the hose into position, the fire meanwhile enveloping the place, the two men poured a double stream of water through one of the windows. Suddenly one of them dropped his hose, and pointed excitedly to the office. His companion turned toward him, and then looked in the same direction ; and, after a hasty conference, they both leaped from the shed, and hurried across the yard. Like magic the news spread throughout the vast crowd, that there was some one in the burning building. The excitement became intense. In suppressed whispers, and faces blanched with sympathetic fear, the people asked one of another, "Who is it ?" No one could tell. Then, like magic again, it became known all through the crowds that it was Mr. Staincliffe, and the excitement be-

came intenser still, while all eyes, on that side of the building which afforded the view, were turned toward the office. Three men were seen through the smoke, two firemen and another, planting a ladder against the office window, and, while the firemen held the ladder, and waited for his return, the other mounted to the window, and disappeared within. The people who were watching cheered the rescuer in his perilous enterprise. "Who is it?" again asked the crowds in quick breath and with dilated eyes, and the answer spread, "Robert Cresswell." They waited, and waited, and waited; every second seemed a minute, every minute seemed an hour; the excitement became painful; the crowd was hushed to silence, and nothing was heard save the crackle and roar of the fire, then, at the window, tugging at a heavy burden, Robert Cresswell reappeared, and a mighty shout of admiring welcome burst from the throats of the people. The burden seemed too heavy for him; he got it across the window, and stepped himself upon the ladder; but, suddenly relaxing his hold, he fell heavily to the ground. The firemen mounted the ladder, and brought the burden down between them—a burden disfigured and lifeless, all that remained of the mortal part of John Staincliffe.

Robert Cresswell was carried to the hospital, suffering from a fractured shoulder, a broken thigh, and injuries from fire to hands and face which left upon him scars that were not removed to his dying day. He did not mind these. He had done his duty. The only sorrow he had was that he

had not been able to bring out John Staincliffe alive.

The fire burned down, the people dispersed, a feeling of sadness fell upon the whole town. The origin of the fire could not be explained. The presence of Mr. Staincliffe in the office, and, as Robert Cresswell testified, in a heavy stupor, was a mystery. Weeks after, when the claims upon himself and the firm had been sent in, and his financial affairs had been thoroughly examined, it became known among the people that he had been going the wrong way for a long time. He had become involved in stock exchange speculations of the most reprehensible kind. His own money had disappeared; and other moneys, for which he was sole trustee, and on which other people were dependent for a livelihood, beside moneys placed in his hands on behalf of minors, and to be paid with interest, when the children attained their majority, had also vanished, and could not possibly be recovered. The sound commercial reputation of the firm, his own good name, strengthened by the good name of his father before him, his well-known intimate connection with one of the leading religious denominations of the town, all induced people to think of him as a trustworthy man. And so he was, until he yielded to the desire for increased wealth by short processes, not contented to gain it as his father had gained it, and he himself hitherto, by honest and natural means. The desire increased until it became a consuming passion and hurried him into a fearful catastrophe. If the fire had not

occurred, he must before long have become bankrupt ; and he would have been forced to face in a court of justice the charge of misappropriating funds of which he was guardian, with the inevitable consequences of disgrace and imprisonment ; and when the people thought of this in connection with the fire, and his death, they drew their own conclusions.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FATAL FASCINATION.

TOM was the first to carry the sad news of the disaster to Deerhill. The sound of the buzz had been faintly heard by them ; they had seen the ruddy gleam in the sky, and knew that there must be a fire in Easingholme ; but never imagined that the fire was at their own works, and that Mr. Staincliffe had been brought out of the burning building, dead. When Tom told his tale they were stricken with an overwhelming sorrow. Mrs. Staincliffe fell into unconsciousness beneath the blow. Belle wandered up and down the house as if demented with grief. Lizzie wept bitterly, but, in her tears, administered restoratives to her mother, and endeavored to bring her to herself. Her efforts were unavailing. The doctor was called in, and she was carried to her room, and placed in bed, with a face pale as death, and only faintly breathing, and yet perhaps mercifully oblivious to the great grief which had suddenly broken into her heart and home.

When Lizzie and Isabell were sufficiently composed to enter into conversation, it was arranged that Tom should dispatch a telegram to Herbert in the morning, apprising him of the event, and asking him to hurry home. He could say very little to comfort the two sisters. The sorrow was so fresh

that words of comfort were like empty wind. He had his own trouble, too, of which he said nothing to Lizzie and Belle. He had seen his father, and knew that his condition was very precarious. He was anxious to be with him at the hospital. With a promise that he would return in the morning, he hastened away, and was soon by his father's bedside. His mother was already there, ministering, as best she could, to her husband's need.

Robert Cresswell was in great pain, but he smiled at Tom as he came towards him, and moved his burnt hand to the edge of the bed by way of greeting. Tom saw that he wished to speak to him, and he bent low to hear his whispered words.

"Have you been to Deerhill, Tom?"

"Yes, father."

"How are they?"

"Mrs. Staincliffe is very poorly, crushed by the news, and unconscious. She is in bed now, but the doctor says there is no immediate danger. Lizzie and Belle are bearing up moderately well."

"What about Herbert?"

"I am to wire him in the morning."

He inclined his head as if satisfied with the reply.

"How are you, father?"

"Not very well, Tom."

"What do the doctors say?"

"They say they'll bring me round, and I think they will. But if they don't it will be all right, Tom. *I know in whom I have believed.*" His face again broke into a smile, visible notwithstanding the ban-

dages that nearly covered it, and his eyes filled with light.

Next morning, when Tom was about leaving home to wire Herbert, a telegram was brought to the door addressed to him. He hastily opened the envelope, and read the message. His face turned pale, his hands trembled, and he looked in consternation at his mother.

“What is it, Tom?” she asked, in startled tones.

“Oh, mother! another great sorrow!”

“How? What? Tell me, Tom!” said Mrs. Cresswell, excitedly.

“Herbert is drowned!”

“Herbert! Drowned!” exclaimed Mrs. Cresswell. “Let me see, Tom.” And taking the telegram from Tom’s hands, Mrs. Cresswell read the news.

There were no details in the telegram. Kate had sent it. Evidently her wish was, in sending the telegram to Tom, that he should break the news to the family.

Tom went to Deerhill, to keep his promise of the evening before, and also to break the further news of trouble to the already stricken family. Mrs. Fairfax had heard of the calamity at Easingholme, and was at Deerhill when Tom arrived. She saw him, and informed him that Mrs. Staincliffe was still in a comatose condition. Belle was in her bedroom, suffering from a severe headache, the result of a waking night of grief. Lizzie was with her mother, and would come down to him when Mrs. Fairfax took her place. Tom seized the

opportunity of showing Mrs. Fairfax Kate's telegram. She was inexpressibly shocked by the news, and, when she spoke, tremulously said to Tom,—

“Whatever shall we do?”

“I must leave you to tell Lizzie and Belle, Mrs. Fairfax; and I will pack up at once for Mentone, make the necessary arrangements there, and bring Kate home with me.”

“But your father is very dangerously injured, is he not? I saw that stated in the morning paper. He might not want you to leave him!”

“I am quite sure father would have me do what I am proposing to do. He is badly hurt, but the doctors say he will recover.”

By noon Tom had obtained leave of absence from the Bank, said farewell to his father and mother, gathered together the few things he required for the journey, and was seated in the express for London. He made what speed he could across the Channel, and hastened across the Continent by the quickest trains to the Riviera. Kate was expecting him, having received a telegram the day before to say that he was coming. She knew nothing of the catastrophe at Easingholme. Tom allowed her to ease her full heart by pouring out her grief to him before he said anything about the trouble at home. Then he cautiously approached it, and revealed to her the other sorrow in which they were plunged at Deerhill.

Not until next day did Tom obtain the details connected with Herbert's death. The first fortnight of the honeymoon had passed very pleasantly. The

different towns of the Riviera had been visited. The charming scenery had been thoroughly enjoyed. Driving, boating, concerts, social interchange, the observation of foreign ways, their own happiness,—all had combined to make that first fortnight a most delightful time. Upon their second visit to Monaco, Herbert, prompted by curiosity, would go to the Casino at Monte Carlo and watch the players at their various games; and, notwithstanding Kate's remonstrance, ventured a small amount at *roulette*. He was inclined to venture again, but Kate insisted upon leaving, and soon after persuaded him to return to Mentone.

On the following Thursday Herbert was missing. Kate had noticed the full trains passing every day through Mentone, and returning as full in the evening. She wondered at first why this was so, but soon found out that the excitement of gambling in the far-famed Casino at Monte Carlo drew the crowds from all the towns of the Riviera in that direction. Some professed to go for a change of scene, others to view the picturesque coast line *en route*, and others again to listen to the music, but for most of them the fascination was the Casino. Herbert felt the fatal drawing, and slipped away on this Thursday morning without informing Kate of his intention. She surmised where he had gone, and followed him. She found him engaged at one of the tables in playing *trente-et-quarante*, and it was only with difficulty she could prevail upon him to leave the table, and afterwards to promise that he would not play again.

But the fascination had enthralled him. He was continually under temptation. The habit he had formed at home, and quietly indulged even when other habits had been broken, asserted itself with prevailing power. Kate kept a strict watch upon him. She feared to let him go out of her sight. She proposed that they should turn their steps homeward, and spend the remainder of the honeymoon in Paris and London. But Herbert played with the proposal, and lingered in Mentone day after day. One afternoon a lively Frenchman engaged him in conversation, into which he entered with unwonted eagerness. Kate was a little way from them, and could not hear what was said, but she observed the Frenchman's animated manner, and shrugs and grimaces, with some amusement, and thought, by Herbert's remarkable attention, that what he was saying must be of uncommon interest. In the evening she said to Herbert,—

“What was that volatile Frenchman talking about this afternoon?”

“He was explaining a system of playing *roulette*, which if carefully followed, would be sure to result in success.”

“Has he tried it himself?”

“Yes! and made a heap of money.”

“Then why did he explain it to you?”

“He proffered to do it for a consideration—a few francs—and so I paid him, and he told me.”

“You don't intend trying it, Herbert?”

“I do. It is as plain as A B C. In an hour or two I could make all our expenses.”

"I don't believe it, Herbert. How do you know the system will work? The man may be a rogue. You have never seen him before."

"The system will work beautifully, Kate. It is only a matter of simple calculation. I can see through it easily. Don't you distress yourself about me."

"You promised me, Herbert, that you would not play again."

"At *trente-et-quarante*. But this is *roulette*. And I did not understand this method of playing when I promised you?"

"I very much dislike gambling, Herbert. No good will come of it, I am sure. Let us go to Paris to-morrow."

"Well! I'll tell you what I'll do, Kate. I'll try the system, and, if I find it failing, I'll give it up, and we'll go to Paris the day after to-morrow. I don't call it gambling myself when there are definite lines to go upon, and one knows beforehand how everything will turn out. That is not gambling, not venturing on mere chances whether you win or lose, but calculation; and if your calculations are correct you must win."

"I am not a casuist, Herbert, and do not desire to trouble myself with nice distinctions. The whole thing is wrong, and you ought not to have anything to do with it. If you go to Monaco again it will be in opposition to my wishes."

But Herbert's mind was made up. For answer he simply kissed the troubled face of his young wife and did not refer to the subject again.

Next morning he was gone. He procured a card for the Casino. Very soon he was deeply engaged in *roulette*. He placed his money time after time upon certain numbers on the table, and watched the cylinder and ball revolve with feverish interest. His calculations were nicely made, and the time came for him to recoup himself, but lo! the ball dropped into the wrong space, and he had lost instead of won. He would try a second time. As the game again proceeded, his interest deepened, and, when the time came for him to win according to the system he was carefully following, his interest became intense ; but the second time he lost, and his money was swept away. He began to doubt the system, and thought he would return to Mentone. But he was tempted to try the third time, and the third time he won. He became greatly excited. He felt convinced that the failures the first and second time were owing to miscalculations. He had now got well hold of the system. He was on the high road to fortune. He tried again, and again, and again, failure succeeding failure, however, almost without a break, his excitement increasing all the while, until he became oblivious to everything but the spinning cylinder and ball. When his money was all gone he suddenly realized his position. The system was a fraud, as cleverly devised as most others, but the most cleverly devised cannot defeat the purpose of the "Bank" at Monte Carlo.

A young man hired a boat at Mentone that evening. The boat was found, three hours later, float-

ing without an occupant; and during the night a body was washed ashore, the body of Herbert Staincliffe.

As soon as arrangements could be made, Tom had the body placed in a shell, and brought it with him, accompanied by the young widow, to Easingholme. In one week there were two funerals from Deerhill—father and son, both ruined by the same evil, which had fascinated both in different ways. The double event made a profound impression upon the town. The sympathies of the people for the sorrowing family were deeply moved. And yet there were very few who calmly considered the cause of all this sorrow, and fewer still who were willing to remove it from their own lives, and, so far as they could, from the lives of others. Gambling still increased, and prepared fresh victims, from all classes of society, for misery and death.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

TIME, under the blessing of God, is very merciful. With his soft, healing hand upon us, our minds are quieted, and our hearts find rest. The troubles that distressed us, the sorrows, that filled our hearts, are not taken quite away, but better than that, they are transformed, and remain only to bless us by a wider, deeper and richer experience.

Mrs. Staincliffe was long absorbed with the bitterness of her grief. Lizzie found her solace in the Sunday-school at Brindley, and in the visitation of certain people whose troubles were as great as her own. Belle mourned in secret, and in secret also sought comfort from a source to which she had never been driven before. She obtained something besides comfort. A new gladness beamed in her eyes, a rarer beauty revealed itself in her countenance. She joined Lizzie in her Sunday-school work, and requested Lizzie to allow her to bear her company in her visits to the poor. Lizzie's heart was overjoyed. She said, "I know what it is, Belle. You have found peace. You have seen the Saviour. Haven't you?" And Belle put her arms round her neck, and kissed her.

Gradually the bitterness passed away from Mrs. Staincliffe's mind and heart. She began to interest herself in household affairs. She saw the calm

sweet life of her two daughters, and her heart began to fill with gratitude, then with joy. There was much to be done, and like a true woman she bestirred herself to do it. Deerhill had to be vacated, and arrangements made for another home. Many business matters required her attention. Various financial settlements had to be made. Her own private income was greatly reduced, but she parted with the money without a pang. And, by the time they had entered upon their altered life in a small villa at Brindley, Mrs. Staincliffe felt that the keenness of her grief was gone, and that she was another woman.

A new joy came into her life the next Christmas by the advent of a babe at Dunsford—a babe named after his father, Herbert Staincliffe. Her sister and daughter-in-law removed to Brindley, and occupied a neighboring villa, and she became happier still. She nursed the babe, and kissed him, and wept over him, and saw all kinds of fancied resemblances to his father in him while he was very young, and as he grew up he became the hope of her life.

Two years passed away and Lizzie had left her, Tom Cresswell's happy bride; another two years, and Belle had gone, married to Harry Clough, who wooed and won her by his sunny face and faithful heart. These marriages were no sorrow to her, because both daughters settled in Easingholme, and she saw them frequently. Mrs. Fairfax and Kate came to live in the same house with her after Belle's marriage, and the three women devoted themselves to the care of Herbert's child.

One morning Mrs. Staincliffe was summoned to Easingholme to Tom's home. Belle had arrived before her. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cresswell were also there. A nurse came into the room where they were sitting, accompanied by Tom, with a beaming face, and a precious bundle in his arms. He had bargained with the nurse to carry the bundle, and had promised that he would do it with the most scrupulous care. The wrappings were thrown aside to disclose a dainty mortal in muslin and lace, squeezing his eyelids tightly together to keep out the light, and protesting with all the power of his lungs against this public exhibition. Tears came into Mrs. Staincliffe's eyes. Turning to Robert Cresswell, who, with scarred face, was standing by, she said,—

“What shall we call him, Robert?”

And with deep emotion, and a gladsome heart, Robert replied,—

“John Staincliffe Cresswell.”

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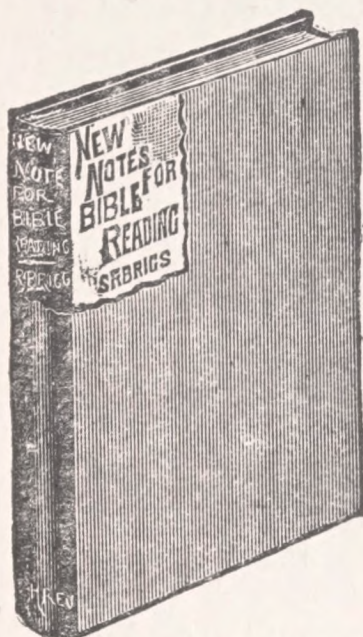
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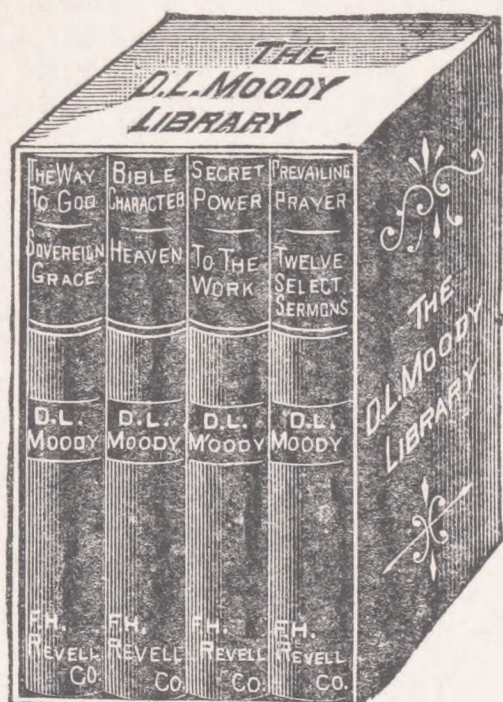
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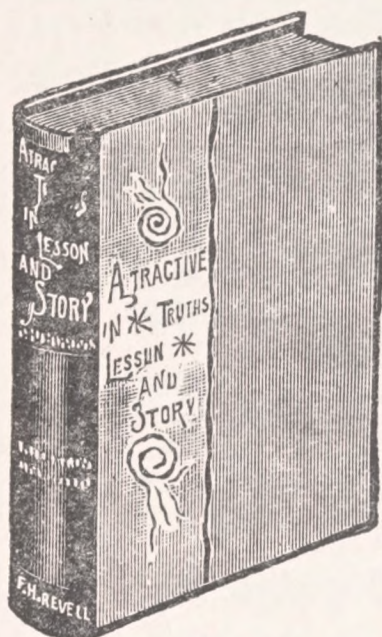
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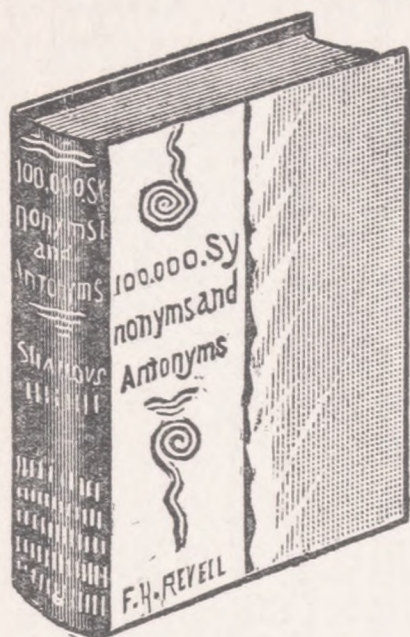
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